CHILDREN OF THE WIND

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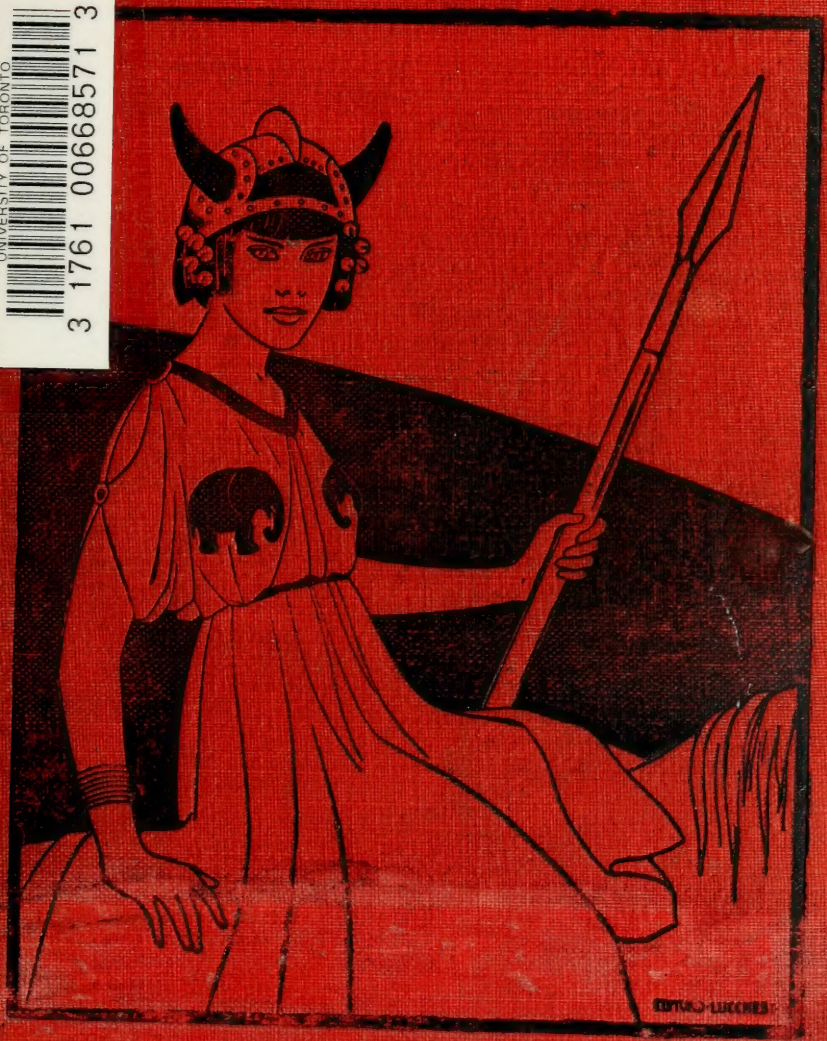

By M. P. SHIEL

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M. P. SHIEL

Author of "The Yellow Danger"

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CHILDREN OF THE WIND

I

ROLLS

MR. R. WARREN COBBY writes in his diary (June 8th):

"Tea in the Carlton tea-room with Jeffson of the F. Office, when in walks Stead of the Bank, with a man of Greater-British type—"flash" hat, rather handsome person, black-bearded, blue-eyed, brown-baked—forty-five, fifty. Stead, on seeing me, throws up a finger, as who should say 'the very man,' and, coming to my table, introduced the colonial as 'Mr. R. K. Rolls,' adding: 'By special request, Cobby.'

"'Mr. Rolls knew of me,' I remarked.

"'That's so, Mr. Cobby: happy to make your acquaintance,' Rolls said, and we four had tea and talked, or three of us, for the tongue of my Rolls was still: not so the man's eyes though, I noticed, for I think that nobody entered, went out, or moved in the place, that he did not see it—apprehensive, haunted perhaps I might say; and though one gets a general impression from his air and gait of a laggard and languid swagger, some of his motions and glances are as sharp as a panther's—middle-sized man, straight in the legs, his blue eyes broody, sleepy—sleep of the spinning-top, perhaps—and written all over him '*Experience*.'

"He interested me—apart from my curiosity as to what the man wanted to know me for.

"'You know Australia, I think, Mr. Rolls?' I said to him.

"'Oh, yes,' he answered absently, eyeing under his brows a man who stood up some way off; adding: 'African mainly, Mr. Cobby.'

"Stead put in: 'Explorer, I think we may say, Mr. Rolls?'

"'Well, not quite,' Rolls said, twisting now quickly away to peer at someone coming in, then adding with a twinkle in his eye: 'never mind, "explorer" is near enough.'

"Then Jeffson invited the trio of us to Jermyn Street, and thither the journey was—stupid waste of time and life! Inane people these super-clerks, and all their kind 'about town.' When they have forgotten Greek, there is nothing left in them, and before they forget there is nothing. Then, why associate with them? I won't; not good enough: they waste life. Fifty of 'em aren't worth one Rolls, I think. Dinner with them at 'The Troc'; then 'The Empire,' to show girls in tights to Rolls, who has been in England only two weeks; but Rolls said that he was accustomed to see 'more elegant' legs than those without any tights on. Oh, the 'Empire'! What's Empire to me, or I to Empire? No, I was not amused. Then, walking up Regent Street, Rolls with me, the other two ahead, says Rolls: 'Do me the honour to dine at my expense to-morrow?'

"'The honour'—'at my expense.' If he had not said 'at my expense,' I should no doubt have said no, but this naïf, and so true, way of putting it won me, so that I answered: 'Since you wish, Mr. Rolls. Why do you?'

"He looked about and behind before he answered: 'You see, I know you better than you know me. Quite five years ago I did business with you, but you've forgotten; seen you several times before to-day. Then I'm a bit of a thought-reader in my way—"psychometrist," they call it here—seen enough of that out there'—throwing his hand toward the

Equator: 'I could tell you quite a lot about yourself.'

"'Tell me something,' I said.

"'For one thing,' he began, and then, quick as a wink, he span on his pins, calling out sharply to a man now close upon us: 'Well, sir! How can I be of service to *you?*'

"I saw a big man in a cloak, whose collar covered his ears, he standing now with shoulders shrugged up high, his innocent palms expanded, a picture of French astonishment, and says he to Rolls: 'Mister addresses himself to me by chance?'

"Rolls made no answer, peered into his face, looked him up and down, then said to me: 'Come on'; on which the other laughed, with some effort, I fancied, and crossed the street, as we moved on.

"And presently Rolls remarked: 'You see, we are of interest to others'; and when I asked him if he really believed that that man had been eavesdropping upon us, he answered: 'I know.'

"'What for, though?' I asked him.

"This he did not answer, but said: 'I was to tell you something about yourself: check me, if I go wrong. Age thirty-two. Residence, Tillington, Sussex. Living alone with a sister. Man of means—no need to swot at work. Yet you do. Hard worker, energetic, always glancing at the clock. If I didn't know it otherwise, I could spot it from the roan red of that hair of yours, from the style it grows upward and backward in a thicket of wires that curl, or from that fresh flush of your colour, or from the style your elbows work up and down when you walk, like an engine on the jig. Stern worker. Proud of your head-piece. Proud of your Age and Continent. "Nourishing a youth sublime with the fairy-tales of Science"—quotation from a poet. Now engaged for the Government at Teddington in discovering the best camber for aeroplane-wings. Fond of flight, of rush, of getting things over and done. *I* know you. For wealth you care nothing——'

"'Don't I, though, by Jove,' I said: 'love wealth—any form of Energy. Wealth is stored Force, Power. that is, God, and is well named *goods;* is potential Energy—Power to do good to oneself and others.'

"'Well said,' Rolls muttered: 'yet you have two or three rich relatives, one of them'—he flung a flying glance behind—'an emperor of wealth—a cousin—and little you bother about him, because he's not of the intellectual set. And you have another cousin—female cousin'—now he put his lips to my ear—'a *Queen*, this one——'

"I could not help laughing out at the earnestness with which he imparted this absurdity; and I said to him: 'No, there the "thought-reading" is miscarrying: no female cousin—certainly no queens in the family.'

"He did not answer at once, but then suddenly patted my arm, saying: 'I may see fit to tell you more when we are better acquainted.'

"Soon after which, having arranged to meet to-morrow at the Hotel Cecil, we parted; and I walked back home by the Embankment under a black sky bright with Sirius and the three present planets."

II

ROLLS STABBED

THE next night Cobby and Rolls duly dined together ; and Cobby writes of it :

" Such a care about the selection of the table ! for Rolls must have one in a corner, whence to survey all the *salle à manger*.

" When this had been obtained, I showed him the note that had come to me by the morning's post, on which Rolls produced spectacles, saying, as in apology : ' I have the best of eyesight in sunlight, Mr. Cobby, but artificial light bowls me over for reading purposes.' Then he muttered over the note ' type-written,' and read it half-aloud drawingly : ' The man, R. K. Rolls, is nothing else than a common jail-bird, well-known in the Rand as an assassin, a slave-trader, a swindler and thief, a scoundrel of the deepest dye. To be connected in any shape or form with this dirty rascal spells certain disaster. Be warned in time, Cobby. A well-wisher.'

" Looking at Rolls, as he read, I saw his eyes twinkle. ' Oh, well,' he said, taking off the spectacles, ' you evidently don't reckon me up to be as black as I'm painted, or you'd not be here.'

" I told him no, that such a communication is without weight for me.

" ' Then, we need say no more about it,' he said, and : ' May I keep this pleasant missive ? ' and, on my saying yes, put it inside his watch.

" Then I had quite a pleasant evening with him. Though not exquisite in culture outside, he exhibits considerable shrewdness of wit on things in general, a sound sense, a trained intelligence, and such a storehouse of memories and world-lore as render him really an entertaining person, his lips once unsealed. I

found myself liking, admiring, him—so much, that when he expressed a wish to feel what flight is like, I immediately offered to take him into the air, he to come to-morrow to the aerodrome. It is not true that he is a rogue : I know better. Of the anonymous note he said nothing more until the dinner was over, we then smoking 'long Toms,' as he called them, cigar-sticks which he produced out of a tube of leopard-skin, his dress-clothes being constructed with quite a number of pockets apparently ; and now he said to me : 'I suppose you couldn't reckon up who it was sent you that pleasant missive ? '

"I said no, how could I without data ? on which he, his voice dropping to secrecy : 'That comes from a cousin of yours.'

"This had the effect of tickling me, and I said, 'Really ! You people the world with my cousins, Rolls ? '

"'I have only mentioned two all told,' he answered —'a male and a female.'

"'I think I have only one cousin,' I told him—'a Yankee—millionaire—man named Douglas Macray——'

"'Let's talk low,' he muttered ; and added : '*he* is our man, sir.'

"'Well, but,' I said, 'the man does not know me' ; but then, remembering something, I mentioned that he knew *of* me, since, some years ago, I got from him an invitation to a ball, but didn't go ; on which Rolls said : 'Aye, always giving big parties, fond of fal-lals and high jinks, especially in Paris. You've called him "a Yankee," but he's only half that, since, as you know, his mother and yours were English sisters, and he has mostly lived in France. Curious you never chanced to drop across him. I'll introduce him now to you."

"On this Rolls picked something from a pocket, and, holding it within his fist, brought his fist into contact with my palm, on which he left a disc of card-board, and I saw the photograph of a man of thirty or so—bearded—something hard-headed, cynical,

self-seeking (I fancied)—man of some draught and horse-power, tearing toward his own ends—or that was my impression—something flat and flabby about the upper lip, as though he lacked upper teeth. . . .

" Rolls, taking back the photograph as clandestinely as he had handed it, said : ' That's Douglas Macray —that's the gentleman. Never saw him in the flesh myself : but that's he.'

" ' Well, what about him ? ' I asked. ' Why are you and he bad friends ? '

" ' Because '—he tossed down his ' long Tom ' with emphasis—' I refuse to be bribed by his dirty hand ; and because he drops to it why I am in England, and wants to bottle me up.'

" ' Why are you in England ? '

" ' Mainly to get *you*.'

" ' How do you mean " get " me, Rolls,' I demanded.

" ' Get you out yonder,—he nodded away toward one of the continents.

" ' Get me to go to Africa ? ' I asked.

" ' That's about it.'

" ' You won't do that, Rolls,' I told him.

" On which he muttered, with his eyes cast down : ' Leave it at that for the present. Maybe when I see my way to put my cards down, you won't be off it. A Red Kaffir *inyanga*—that's a doctoress—predicted that what I am now on would come off all right, though I might die in the attempt, said she. Well, you don't believe in *inyangas*, and yet I could tell you a tale or two——'

" ' That's right,' I said, ' tell me tales . . . though, of course, *I* am trained to believe in white people, not in black.'

" But this as little influenced his conviction as it unfixed the sculpture of those tough and weather-beaten wrinkles of his face. ' Well, no doubt,' he answered : ' but it appears, Mr. Cobby, that we are made with *two* minds—the conscious mind has talent, and finds things out, but the subconscious, that's really the cleverer fellow of the two, has genius, and

knows, without swotting to find out : this being true, not only of humans, but of horses, dogs, elephants. I know a little Basuto pony that foreknew the date of his master's death '—he now proceeded to relate several tales of African occultism, but without presenting any proof of their truth, while we each smoked another ' long Tom,' he finishing up with the advice, ' Don't despise the negro, Mr. Cobby,' and with the statement : ' After all, the savage is ahead of the civilized.'

" This dictum disappointed me in him, as I had thought better of his intelligence ; but even here it turned out that he had a meaning, and he can be very convincing when he sets himself to prove. He said : ' That, to you, is all-out nonsense, no doubt. But reflect a bit : what is it that all are after—all dogs, men, Martians, angels ? " Happiness," you'll say, since nothing else can possibly be of any interest to any life for one instant. Yonder hangs a Christ on his Cross : what's he there for ? The good of others ? Sure thing : but that's what makes *him* happy, look ; and he bears the nails, that " he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," or happy. Or look at that man yonder flying from a prairie-fire—staring he is, crazy for life ; then look yonder at that other holding a revolver at his forehead : both flying from sorrow, both after happiness. Same with you brooding in your laboratory : for *you* the discovery of truth spells happiness, and your interest in truth is an interest in happiness : for why should you care more for truth than for untruth, for pudding more than for putty, for any one thing more than for any other thing, but that truth and pudding make for happiness ? Happiness is the aim of the race of life ; and, of course, those nearer the aim are ahead of those not so near.'

" To this I readily agreed, since really it is an axiom ; but asked him if he considered savages happier than I ; to which he answered : ' No, not than you ; but such as you aren't Civilized Man : you're an

accident of civilization. Like you are half a million, say, in England—foreigners looking on at the forty million real English inspanned to the buck-waggon of England, dragging at the trek-tow, sweating great drops. Well, of course, that's not practical politics ; that's no chop any road : Unhappy is the name of it. Hence, when the crew of the *Endeavour* made acquaintance with Otahito, some of 'em did a bunk, thinking : " No more England for *us*." But when I say that the savage is " *ahead*," don't take me for a fool. Here is a river, the river of life '—he drew it in pencil on the table-cloth—' and here is the sea to the East. Let the sea represent Happiness, Bliss and no end. Well, the river runs East to A, and at A is the savage ; but then it winds back West toward B, and between A and B is the civilized : evidently A is nearer the sea, and so ahead of B, but B is further on nearer bliss, and so ahead of A. At B, as I pan it out, the river breaks into cataracts and rapids—revolution there—civilized man grabbing the planet's crust out of the grasp of the foreign onlookers who now hold it, and thence the course toward Happiness may be rapid, and the savage soon be nowhere in comparison. The same may be true of the two minds—the conscious, and the sub-conscious. As life in becoming civilized, has lost something for a time, so, in becoming intelligent, it has lost something ; dogs and horses are more psychic, or " sensitive," as they say, than men, and will see an apparition quicker, and black men more than white men. But maybe when the river of Mind turns again toward the sea, men may be more psychic than any dog for being more intelligent, just as they will be all the more happy for being civilized. So I pan it out. Don't look round suddenly : one of the enemy has entered—the man at the table behind that lady with the diamond spray.'

" I glanced, and saw a young man, who might have been a Neapolitan count—handsome, but for his loutish, foul mouth. He was in talk with a garçon, and seemed to be thinking of anything but Rolls.

" ' One of the enemy,' I said : ' who are they ? and —how do you know ? "

" 'Agents of Macray,' he answered, ' who is out to get me, and it's no chop when a rascal has power. How I know ? By the movement of an eyelid. Besides, I live here, and so does yonder carrion-crow.'

" All this I found difficult to realize ; and, reverting to the previous question, asked him if he was sure that the savage is the happier.

" ' Down to the ground sure ! ' was his answer : ' your savage is likelier to die sudden, I admit : but you come with me to Basutoland, that belongs to the nation like the air, and for every rag and groan in Glasgow or Bethnal Green you will see a grin of gladsomeness, and a toe that dances. " Here," the Barotse say, " hunger is not known." Or come with me—— Yes, I think I may tell you now of another country : Wo-Ingwanya—but don't pronounce the " I," Ngwanya say ; the people are Wa-Ngwanya : one of them is a Mo-Ngwanya ; their language is Se-Ngwanya. Far up country—South-Central Africa —not far from the Indian Ocean—" Children of the Elephant," they call themselves, either because they are Zulu in origin, or because of an enormous rock, bigger than London, that stands on four low legs ; but I in my own mind always call them " Children of the Wind," because in those uplands the breezes of heaven don't cease from streaming through their feathery head-dress, breathing upon their faces health and freshness—at least, they didn't during the weeks I was there—and sometimes terrific tempests visit them. It is sixteen years since I first heard of that country, and then I heard one and another assert that no such country is on earth ; ey, but there *is* that country, for not nineteen months gone I was in it with a caravan of negroid Arabs, and saw the men inlay metals—noblest lot of blacks I've dropped upon. They trekked north, like Umzilikaze ; but long before Chaka's day—before any Zulu King whose name is known to us ; yet are so conservative,

that I could still drop to much of their lingo. Well, those darkies are in Paradise in comparison with St. Pancras—scream with laughter of heart in the face of sun and moon, their moochas of ox-tails and plumes of ostrich and saccaboola feathers, that stream on the breezes, seeming to scream with laughter, too—so long as they don't get killed, look, by enemies, or by " our mother "—that's their ruler : for *she's* a devil of a despot. " Our mother " owns each inch of Wo-Ngwanya for her people, and is paid rent for it ; no man may say " this acre is *mine* " ; and that's where the laughter comes from, if I am a man that knows anything. Eh, but she's a hot un, is " our mother " ; *I* ought to know : the beggar sentenced me to death—ugliest bit of road I've yet got over. If a Mo-Ngwanya girl slips, without " our mother's " consent, that's a sure case of " off with her head "—harsh, bloody. And who do you think " our mother " is ? '—here Rolls laid his hand on mine, hard, with the knuckles whitened—' You'd never guess ; hear it *now :* girl of seventeen—eighteen by this time. *White* girl. Hear her name : *Spiciewegiehotiu.*'

" His voice had risen and risen, his eyes had brightened, and he uttered this procession of a name, ' Spiciewegiehotiu,' in such a crescendo of loudness, that most of the diners glanced our way. It seemed to be uttered in defiance and challenge, the defiance of one breaking through long restraint, for at the same time fire shot out of his eyes toward the Neapolitan-looking man seven yards away. Immediately afterwards he smiled on me, nodded, rose, and saying : ' Back in two minutes,' walked away out.

" A minute afterwards I saw the foreigner also saunter out.

" Well, Rolls did not return in ' two minutes '—I wished that he would, for just then I felt sick at my second ' long Tom '—horridly strong and raw—and presently I became aware of some commotion in the entrance-hall west of me—running feet, calls—so, among others, I hurried out to see, and there by the

Office stood a mob, craning to see something in their midst, the hotel-people fussing about, begging them to stand back.

"I, being taller than most, soon caught sight of a form—'the enemy,' the Neapolitan—lying unconscious, and one of the diners, probably a doctor, kneeling near, whom I heard say: 'Only a faint—right arm broken'; and I understood that the injured must have been on the way to seek aid for his arm, but had fainted before reaching the portal.

"Some moments afterwards my left eye caught sight of Rolls strolling in from the inner, south, *salle*, and saw him throw himself upon a lounge at the inner side of the entrance-hall.

"When I went to him, I saw him rather pallid under his tan, rather scant of breath, and, showing me a dagger, he told me, 'I went to the lavatory—thought myself alone—he stabbed me in the back with this—I cracked his arm.' He showed me some blood on his fingers.

"'Come,' I said, and led him toward the front, where a crowd and two constables were now watching the foreigner being carried into a cab for hospital; and Rolls I soon had in a cab for Essex Court, where, after 'phoning Dr. Hammond to come, I undressed Rolls; but the wound, an island in an ocean of tattooing, I at once saw to be of no importance, so 'phoned Hammond not to bother, and dressed it myself.

"'But what about the legal aspect?' I then said to Rolls: 'this is London in Europe.'

"'Oh, the incident is ended,' Rolls said, putting on his vest: 'it's no chop my charging him, and he, you may bet, won't charge me. May the stink-cats all catch it as hot, and may the devil get their master, his son.'

"I gave him to drink, and he stayed with me, telling tale after tale of venture and escape, funds of lore, till eleven, then went back to the hotel, saying he'd be at the aerodrome at two, I soon to hear more of his Spiciewegiehotiu, or 'Hot Spice,' I called that lady, 'our mother.' Rolls is a man, and not at all a bad sort."

III

ROLLS LAID LOW

THE next day Cobby duly flew Rolls over London; after which the relation between the two became more established, Rolls spending several evenings at Cobby's chambers, bringing along his own peach-brandy—for himself to sip, alcohol being not often good enough for Cobby; and it was when Cobby was one evening expecting Rolls for the fifth of these visits, that he heard his door-handle wrenched, his door slammed, and on rushing out to his hall, found Rolls there standing with his back on the door, short of breath, and blanched.

"Hurt, Rolls?" Cobby cried out.

"Don't think so," Rolls answered on a pant. "They got me on the stair—rushed me from No. 7 door. . . . Two I treated with the naked mauleys—the third chased me up—fired twice—air-gun—tore my sleeve, see—they wear silent shoes—I hadn't time to draw. . . ."

Indignant blood rushed to Cobby's forehead. "*We*'ll do the attacking!" he cried, running in, to return with a small Colt's.

"You keep out of it"—Rolls held his sleeve.

"This is intolerable!" Cobby said, with a florid forehead—"come on—rout 'em out."

But Rolls held him. "*They* are under cover—it's no chop fighting on ground chosen by the enemy. Wait—wary's the word. I reckon they'll be getting me in the end, but let that cost them something. . . . How would they have got into No. 7?"

Cobby explained that No. 7 had been unoccupied, and must now have been taken by, or for, one of the gang; but complaint at the Inn-office the next day would rid the Temple of them. Meantime the police . . .

But these, bespoken over the telephone, failed to find anyone at No. 7 ; and Cobby, nervous for Roll's life, would not let him go ; so Rolls, for the first time, slept that night in the chambers.

That was the night of the 2nd August.

On the night of the 7th, Rolls was "got," as he would have said.

Near nine he was walking up Essex Street—his usual route for Cobby's—lonely at that hour, obscure at some points—when he was stabbed in the abdomen —mysteriously, for not a living thing did he see near him. Any nerve less trained in alertness than he, any adventurer less veteran in the trick and luck of escape, would doubtless have been laid dead at once ; but something or other caused him suddenly to spring upward, and, instead of in the breast, he was hit below.

He contrived to rise, to stagger and drag himself to the Temple not far, to knock at Cobby's "oak," as formally as if nothing had happened. But as he knocked, he fell ; and some moments afterwards, before the door was opened, Cobby, who had been out, darted up the stair, and there before the door saw the poor man prostrate in sorry case. Rolls sighed : "I think I'm done for."

The effect of this upon Cobby, who was hot-headed and full-blooded, was to cause him to dash into a passion at outrages of this sort done in his own London ; and he vowed vengeance. But for days Rolls could give no lucid account of what had taken place, the police appeared to be beaten, and no vengeance was taken. Indeed, during two whole days Rolls was delirious, the doctors anxious ; but he was too tough a catgut to snap at one tug, and the days of danger passed.

Soon after which he breathed feebly to Cobby : "I've brought no end of a bobbery upon you, haven't I ?—coming here. You were so much nearer—and I reckoned you'd want me to."

"Good Rolls," Cobby answered, pressing his hand, "that's right : there's no bobbery."

Cobby, busy as he was by nature, would stay an hour by the bedside, and himself help in Roll's nursing, till the evening when Rolls was wheeled out to the work-room, when he said to Cobby : " Aye, I think I can drop now to it how they got me. From a motor-car. A rod running in sockets to push out, and a spike or two on the rod to stab with . . . I think I remember a car passing, and I distinctly remember making a spring : I must have caught half a glimpse of something in the half-dark—I can't swear. Well, in the end they'll do me in, no doubt, since they're so down on it."

" Miscreants ! " Cobby muttered, running his fingers through the backwoods of his hair : " if *we* could do *them* in . . . But, as we seem unable to, you cut and run, Rolls. That will be horrible, if, when you get well, you are again——"

" I have always stood up to my man so far," Rolls said, " and am not for turning tail now. The worst of my trouble is that I've brought you, too, into it. Promise me now that you'll not go out unarmed."

" That is foreign to me, Rolls," Cobby answered, looking not unlike the boy in " Bubbles," robed in a camel-hair dressing-grown, and launching into the air a bubble bigger than a trunk, a great globe of glories and glamours, gas-blown, he then experimenting on the surface-tension of bubbles at a lengthy table littered with a tangle of apparatus under bright lamplight : " I don't want to go armed in God's good Fleet Street, nor do I yet understand why these clowns should wish to meddle with me."

Reclined under a rug in a lounge-chair on the other side of the table, Rolls answered : " You see, they pan it out that I'll never play it a lone hand, undertaking a trek to that country so far in the interior without one white companion ; and if Douglas Macray once reckons that you are wiring in with me, his cut-throats will sure be after you, too."

" But am I wiring in with you ? " Cobby demanded. " You see that I have interests here."

With eyes trained sidewards upon him, Rolls watched a little that dainty handicraft before replying: "The thing's worth doing. Seven millions sterling: of which I reckon upon one for me, and one for you, if we put it over."

"How? Tell me now," said Cobby, pausing in the work to stand with his arms akimbo.

And Rolls, after some hesitancy, remarked: "Nurse will be still asleep . . . Very well, we'll talk of that country. . . . You know that your mother's two sisters married two brothers, Jane marrying James Macray, and Ismene marrying Rob Macray. Rob being considerably the elder, his rascal of a son, Douglas Macray, was nine or ten before James married your aunt Jane—I know the whole jimbang of it, for about then I was well in with James in the Witwatersrand, where he laid the foundations of his fortune. Rob, he never had much wealth—once went bankrupt in Chicago—and our swell Douglas Macray would be a nobody to-day, if he wasn't in possession of somebody else's money. Aye, somebody else's, look—not his own—the money of Spiciewegiehotiu."

"Ah! Hot Spice," went Cobby.

"Hot spice—that's pepper—is what she *is*. Eh, she'd have that rascal's head off as sweet and clean——"

"But how was it? Tell me."

"You remember the loss of the *Florida?*"

"Let me see—Yes, yes, of course—I was eighteen—she vanished—my aunt Jane was lost——"

"*And* your uncle-in-law, James Macray, *and* his daughter, your cousin, Flora Macray: the *Florida* being James Macray's 5,000-ton yacht, in which, with a party, he was globe-trotting, going to Japan; but after touching at Somaliland they were caught in one of those easterly Indian Ocean storms, to which they had to turn tail; and to this day the timbers of the wreck of that craft remain on the African coast, for I've seen them."

Cobby lowered himself to sit, saying: "I gather, then, that this Hot Spice is Flora Macray?"

"That's so. James Macray's dollars, inherited by

his brother Rob, and then by Rob's son, Douglas, whose name, too, should be Rob, for 'tis his nature too—those dollars now being spent to murder me for knowing too much—are dollars of Spiciewegiehotiu, every cent, by her father's will——"

"*He* was drowned, then—and my aunt?" Cobby asked eagerly.

"No, not drowned, I think. The *Florida* grounded inside a half-harbour, and probably all hands were saved. They were received, and not badly treated for some weeks, by Daisy, King of M'Niami, a man still alive, for I've done *Konza* to him, and given the beggar ivory—this Daisy being the neighbour to the north-east of Spiciewegiehotiu, and now lives in terror of her sceptre and butting horns, though twelve years ago she was a kid of six in his hands, and with a wink he could have sent her to the kingdom of heaven. . . . Well, sir, after the *Florida* lot had been with Daisy some weeks, Daisy suddenly receives a request from the King of Wo-Ngwanya to hand over to him the white child then in Daisy's great-place, in exchange for five hundred Wo-Ngwanya cattle. Now, this was an all-out rum request; and, as at that time Daisy's M'Niami were considered a more powerful crowd than the Wa-Ngwanya, Daisy scratched his wool and demurred—couldn't drop to what the bobbery was about! the real reason being, that a certain woman of the Wa-Ngwanya, named Mandaganya, had months before had some sort of premonition that a 'lamb coming up out of the water' would make Wo-Ngwanya great—that being what 'Spiciewegiehotiu' *means*, 'Lamb come up out of water.' This Mandaganya, too, I know, by the way—a remarkable woman, I assure you—big, grand being—highly intelligent—and if ever there was a medium, or 'sensitive,' or 'psychic,' as you call 'em here, it is that woman. That woman has outraged the moral sense of all Wo-Ngwanya, all her fifteen children, except two, having different fathers—a capital offence there—yet her influence in the State

remains immense, she being the chief of the College of Doctors—a triumph of personality. Her two children by one father are Sueela and a little brisk beast, sharp as a needle with two points, who is the executioner—a little ink-black beast whose limbs seem oiled, whose close acquaintance I almost made, by George. The flash of that falchion of his will have a head pitching away in one swift swish, and then, his right leg bent before him, his left leg stiff behind him, he'll glance up sharp, as if asking everybody 'how's that for a wonner?' and then the next, and the next—brisk as a flea! and his sister Sueela is Spiciewegiehotiu's pet and weakness; sprig of seventeen, Sueela—ah! you must see Sueela—Venus, my boy—Venus is the thing's name, not Sueela. Spiciewegiehotiu's fondness for her is a scandal in Wo-Ngwanya, by the way, for Sueela's mother, the *inyanga*, comes from the dregs of the people, so——"

"But about the *Florida* people," Cobby interrupted, glancing at the clock.

"Aye, that's the point," Rolls said: "pull me up when I get long-winded. I have a soft spot for that country, and no doubt am apt to gas about my memories of it—'Children of the Wind' I name 'em, dwelling there in this twentieth century among the wrecks of a civilization ancient as Abraham, maybe—relics of pyramid, temple—and, the sweet winds that sweep them—I might do worse than sleep eternally under the turf of those uplands, if those that sleep can be hearing the breezes breathe through the trees at midday and at midnight. But I was telling you—the King of Wo-Ngwanya, panning it out that the white child at Daisy's great-place was the 'lamb come up washed out of the water,' demands her of Daisy; Daisy, for his part——"

But at this point a nurse looked in to claim Rolls, and would not be disobeyed. "Here's another Spicey," muttered Rolls, moving out with her, while another moon covered over with Constantinoples of topaz and opal floated aloft from Cobby's bubble-blower.

IV

THE "CASTLE" LINER

BUT during the two following nights, Cobby had from Rolls the whole story—how Daisy, King of M'Niami, refused to send the white child to Wo-Ngwanya, having been warned by the whites of the *Florida* that, if he separated the child from her parents, the white Knulu-knulu (great-great God) would be down upon him, whereas, if he refused to send her, all would go well with him. By this advice he was guided: whereupon, war—Wo-Ngwanya warning Daisy that, if one hair of the white lamb was harmed, then, the Wo-Ngwanya army, if victorious, would not fail to raze Daisy's great-place to the ground. And Wo-Ngwanya *was* victorious: whereupon Daisy, in a passion of anger against the *Florida* unfortunates for their false prophecy, and for all the disaster it had brought upon his head, turned round and put them all to death, except the little one, whom, on capitulating, he handed over to Wo-Ngwanya.

"Eh," said Rolls to Cobby, "but that King of Wo-Ngwanya was cutting a stick for the back of his own royal house, look. Spiciewegiehotiu was no lamb come up out of any water—dragon more like —Macchiavelli—Napoleon—and proved one too many for that royal house. The prophecy of the *inganya* Mandaganya that 'the lamb' would make Wo-Ngwanya 'great' has proved abundantly true, for when Spicie entered it, that country was no bigger than Bucks; now she can put into the field 180,000 of the brawest warriors—can and does put, for like a butting goat she has pushed and butted, north and east, and west, till that country may now make a map broader than Wales. But her idea was to make Wo-Ngwanya great for herself and her 'children,'

the Wa-Ngwanya, not for the reigning house; and she was not much over sixteen when her scheming and intriguing broke out in the deuce of a bobbery. She got round the King, who now had cancer, to proclaim her his President of the Council at a new-moon ceremony; upon which two of the King's three brothers, and his only son—a lad of nineteen—took flight by night with a troop of followers from Eshowe—that's the royal kraal, or capital—in order to bring three regiments from the North upon Eshowe, seize the power, and get hold of Spiciewegiehotiu and Mandaganya, whose designs they were quite up to. Well, your troop of indunas gallop full bat through a night and day, they reach the regiments, they hold an *indaba*—that's a debate—of officers in a forest at midnight, decide what to do, and to do it quick; and, as the *indaba* is about over, one of the assembly stands up, points at the princes, and commands, 'arrest the traitors'—Spiciewegiehotiu, wrapped in an officer's kaross, her face blackened; and with her her Sueela. She rode back to Eshowe at the head of one of the regiments, the three princes prisoners in its midst."

Cobby over his work murmured "efficient," and Rolls dodged one of the bubble-worlds which Cobby constantly created and launched.

"Aye," Rolls said—"has a sense of the value of seconds, and will always be a minute ahead of her enemy. She had reached the three regiments only one half-hour before the princes, within which interval she had done a world of work and winning. The third of the King's brothers, Dzinikulu, who related to me all this, told me that Sueela on her knees entreated Spiciewegiehotiu to kill the three princes there and then, but that Spicie, who always knows just how far she dares go at any juncture, and goes to the limit of that, but no farther, would not kill—bided her time. But she suffered for this: for soon afterwards she was poisoned—only scraped through by the skill of the doctoress, Mandaganya—and for two months it was as much as the sick King could do

to keep Spiciewegiehotiu living—plot after plot. Then one midnight the King dies; Spicie still sick from poison; and quick the four princes rush, silently invest the sigodhlo—that's the royal enclosure—with troops that they have waiting ready, so to make sure of Spiciewegiehotiu. And now they look through the sigodhlo for Spicie, they ransack it: no Spicie. Spicie has fled, Sueela fled, Mandaganya fled—gone by a little back-way in the very nick of time. The princes give chase; scour the country; they cannot drop upon Spiciewegiehotiu. A rumour comes to them that Spicie has fled north-east to the garrison brigades on the M'Niami frontier, and is marching against them, with a force of 12,000 assegais; on which, with overwhelming numbers, they rush to encounter and crush these regiments. But while butting about, looking for this force, they come to know that it has given them the slip, and is now with Spiciewegiehotiu at the great-place, Eshowe, together with other forces. Back to Eshowe they rush, to crush her there. When they arrive in sight of Eshowe, at ten in the night, they see it all a sea of torches; it sends out to them a sound of carousing, of shield-beating, and drum-beating, dancing and fal-lals. They become aware that Spiciewegiehotiu has that evening been proclaimed Queen of Wo-Ngwanya: and they prepare to invest and besiege Eshowe. Meantime, hundreds on hundreds of emissaries are being sent out from Eshowe to their regiments, by Spiciewegiehotiu, with messages—let them not besiege Eshowe—let them march in—are not the gates flung wide for them? Let them come and kill her, let them come and kill the white lamb washed come up from the water, let them come and kill Wo-Ngwanya, let them come and kill the mother and luck of the Wa-Ngwanya—is not her bosom bared? bared are the young mother-breasts that suckle them—let them come and pierce it with hundreds of spear-points, that they may feel like sons and heroes. And the fakement works all right. As *you* know bubbles and sub-atoms,

so she knows her Wo-Ngwanya, and can move the mass of it with her finger, as a chit's touch launches a ship. Though she has her forces posted out of sight about the town to pounce upon the enemy, if necessary, it isn't necessary, for, as the princes' impi marches upon Eshowe, the populace of Eshowe swarm out to call and talk to it; it thaws, dissolves, and walks off like waters; and in a frantic scene of timbrels and dancing, breast clutched to brother's breast, it enters the gates of Eshowe to the great square, at the top of which Spiciewegiehotiu sits throned within a glare and smoke of flambeaux, tired and sick and pallid, but smiling, seeing prostrate before her feet the manhood of Wo-Ngwanya, hearing howled to heaven from ten thousand throats the roar '*Bayeté!—Sovereign!*' And in the midst of it the princes—for the second time—her prisoners."

Now Cobby paused to stare, and suddenly muttered again: "Efficient, that chit."

"Aye," said Rolls—"and now she saw herself strong enough to strike. After a trial that lasted ten days, a trial on which the entire nation hung in a hush of suspense, she sentenced to death three of the four princes, reprieving only, from some motive of policy, Dzinikulu, the late King's third brother. After the trial, tears, entreaties, warnings, were poured out before her by chiefs and headmen to win her to spare the princes; but Spiciewegiehotiu was deaf to them all, and, as that brisk little beast, Sandelikatze, Sueela's brother, the executioner, swished off the three heads, and glanced up sharp, asking 'how's that?'—I've seen the beast—a howl of dismay went up from Eshowe, seeing that flow of great-great gore, and like one man Wo-Ngwanya clapped hand to mouth at it, and stood dumb. The Wa-Ngwanya are pretty fickle, emotional and touchy; and there were some local insurrections, which Spiciewegiehotiu did not crush, but, by quickly picking a quarrel with Sebingwe, a King to the north-west, and quickly declaring war, turned the thoughts of

everybody from the internal bobbery. And ever since it has been drill, drill, and war, war, with her; nor she don't sit still at Eshowe and send out her impis: under *her* eye they fight, with *her* strategy——"

"Bloody young person," Cobby observed.

"Public-spirited, *I* call it," Rolls replied. "She don't consider that she is there for the good of humanity, look, but for her 'children,' who pay her—is there to make *them* happy and top-dog; and there's no end to her public-spiritedness, to her devotion to the Wa-Ngwanya, to the anxiety of her forehead for them."

"She has quite a hero-worshipper, Rolls," Cobby remarked with a smile.

"Well, no doubt I *am* a bit shook on the girl, though I ought to hate the beggar——"

"Why, then, did she sentence you?"

"Only for proposing to her to let me bring her to Europe—nothing more. She seems, by the way, to have as strong a colour-prejudice against us whites as her father probably had against niggers—as good as told me so in four English words—and very strange it was suddenly to hear that English uttered in Wo-Ngwanya—while I stood before her judgment-seat: up she cocks one eye, trying to remember English, and then, wrinkling up her nose, says she: 'Hwhite—mans—is—stink.' The retort leapt to my mouth, 'And what about white girls? They're worse'—eh, but R. K. Rolls was too old a fowl, thank God, to give it tongue. Aye, she had me in chokey six bitter days under sentence of death inside a continent of a rock that they call 'The Elephant'; and what do you think saved me? Seven matches—the last I had. An inspiration came to me to send them as a present, and they so fascinated her, that she let me off, but banished me, commanding me never more to set foot in Wo-Ngwanya."

"I see—you proposed to bring her to civilization." Cobby said: "you had discovered that she is Flora Macray. How had you?"

"Oh, everything proved it. She remembered the name of the *Florida*, the name 'Flora,' though not the name 'Macray.' I told her I had known her father, and she showed me his photo in a locket—there's no doubt. Of course, I saw at once that there was big money in it—as well as justice—if I could get her home: for if I could make her sign to tip me one million out of seven, that would be fair——"

"But when you offered her the lion's share, she forced upon you the 'Elephant's' portion," Cobby put in.

"Ho! Well put," Rolls cried—"that's how it pans out. However, I was no sooner out of Wo-Ngwanya, with my head still on, than I was playing to get her yet, and, when next in the Witwatersrand, I set about getting together an expedition to kidnap my lady. But I blabbed—a bit. Funds being low just then, I approached Schartz, the financier—didn't let on where that country lies, you may bet, but I let out '*Florida*,' let out 'Flora Macray.' Schartz he had vowed to be mum, but I now know that he was in with the Douglas Macray crowd; and a hint of the fakement actually got into the *Cape Times*. He suggested to me to *sell* my knowledge to the enemy, and lie low ever after, mentioned £20,000, and when I wouldn't look at it, he steered off, the expedition looked sick, and, to top it all, I found myself with Douglas Macray's knife in me. His arm, reaching from Paris, just nearly made me a deader one evening in the Johannesburg Exchange Bar. It was then that I said to myself: '*Cobby!*'"

Cobby rushed his fingers through his leonine bush of hair, shook his head rather irritably. "Leave me out of it, Rolls. I—can't. Beside this surface-tension of bubbles, I am counting the droplets in vapour-clouds with Stokes; and, then, the Government—No, no, leave me out."

"Still, you are coming slowly round, I can see," Rolls remarked with a twinkle.

"I am—*not*, Rolls," said Cobby.

" You don't want me to be assassinated in a London street—that's why."

" No, that's true, I don't, I don't."

" Therefore, you'll come. What's the good of bubbles ? This is solid cash, this proposition—not bubbles. With a million of Spiciewegiehotiu's money in your bank, you could blow bubbles as big as this building. And, then, justice, Cobby. Your cousin. Isn't it a duty ? "

Bent over his work-table, after a while Cobby replied: " I don't see that it is a duty to kidnap anyone. The girl is free, and if she doesn't want—— Moreover, my head is of some value, apparently ; I am not anxious to have it hacked off by the little brisk man who glances up and asks ' how's that ? ' "

" *I*'ll look after your head," remarked Rolls.

" What would have become of your own, if you had had no matches ? " Cobby demanded ; " I hope they were *safety* matches : they deserved that name."

" Ho ! " broke out of Rolls, in whom laughter was a rare and a volcanic event. . . . " Oh, Jimmy ! the wound hurts when I laugh."

" I make painful jokes, I see," Cobby remarked, on which yet another " Ho ! " broke out of Rolls in a pain of explosion.

Then Cobby's grandfather's-clock struck eleven ; his man bore in a supper, consisting mostly of bread and cheese—for so Cobby lived—and, as they sat at table, he asked of Rolls : " But is she—fair at all to look upon, this minx, my cousin ? "

" Spiciewegiehotiu is a beauty," Rolls solemnly asserted. " She is——Did your mother's family, by the way, have black hair ? "

" Dark. My mother's was black."

" So is Spicie's. Looks Spanish to me rather—staid face—pale, strong-boned, grave——I've seen her laugh merrily, but never saw her smile. Sits leaning sideways, her finger-joints at her cheek—steady eyes, meditating on you, judging, dark-blue—noble brow, for though you can't see much of it for

the two wings of hair that cover it, there's a lane between the wings, running up the side of the brow where the hair-parting is, and at that lane you can spy the noble height and bulge of the brow ; and the hair puffs over the ears, which puff may be what makes her Spanish-looking. And her sweet lips, boy, neatly fitted together, a little pressed—rose-leaves may be something like them—not red ones, pink ones—but I can't tell of the winningness and pull of 'em——"

" Why, Rolls ! " Cobby cried, " this is love."

" I wish she'd returned it, then. I shouldn't have been off bussing those particular lips. But no go : white mans is stink. Maybe for a cousin she'd feel different, Cobby : for they say that some cousins are more akin in nature than brother and sister."

" Really ? People say that of cousins ? I am surprised, because it happens to be true—scientifically known. But all that does not allure me, Rolls. You see that I have other pre-occupations than the lips of ladies."

To which Rolls, sipping his peach-brandy, confidently answered : " You never felt the sun, old man : wait till you do, before you boast. Here the sun is a hearsay, as toothache is to one who hasn't it ; but the sun's a Reality, look, and no fun. You've read of the rage of the vegetation of African forests : well, the same with Master Cupid ; a dog in the sun bites the boy, and the boy goes dog-mad."

" Oh, it is all a question of mental pose and habit," Cobby remarked with a pout. " The mind cannot think of two things at the same time——"

" Exactly ! " cried Rolls. " And the sun insists that you think of *it*, and quit bubbles. If you say ' No ' to it, it says ' Very good ; there's no hurry, to-morrow will do.' "

At which Cobby chuckled, roaring out in his big voice : " And this is what you propose to me !—to transform myself from a blower of bubbles into a blower of sighs! Stash the fakement, Rolls, as you say."

But Cobby had been, and was being, more influenced

by Rolls than he admitted to himself, and three nights later was influenced still more by an event.

That midnight he was walking home from a scientific function at the Holborn Restaurant, and, after passing through Lincoln's Inn Fields, had descended some steps behind the Law Courts, going down into the lane of Clement's Inn, where it was dingy and desolate, when three men, who had on masks, appeared before him; and cried one, presenting a revolver: "You were warned, Cobby! Up with the hands!"

Cobby did nothing of the sort. Hot-headed as ever, he sent at the man a blow that staggered him, and had actually felled the second, before he was struggling with the third. As this third and he dropped together, he cut the hand of this one with a lancet, and, reaching out, cut the hand of the second, too, who was still half-prostrate.

Their object, apparently, had been just to strike terror into him, for when all were again on their legs, instead of any shooting, there was a foolish pause, while the two cut ones glanced at their hands, and Cobby touched a bump on his forehead, until on panting breaths Cobby said: "Now, look here—just yonder is King's College Hospital: *run* to it, you two —tell them you've been cut with a septic lancet, or you are likely to have your arms off."

The three looked at one another.

"*C'est la blague*," remarked the non-cut to the cut.

"It is NOT *blague*," Cobby said, suddenly walked away, and was not followed.

All in a flush he reached his chambers, indignant, dominant; and, as he broke into the room where Rolls under his rug awaited his coming, words burst from him. "Well, I have decided, Rolls. I go with you. . . ."

"Good talk!" breathed Rolls astare.

"I've been attacked"—he told the story of it.

Rolls snapped finger and thumb. "Good luck! They reckoned to scare you off, that's it—and have done the other thing! They don't know their Cobby, the blackguards!"

"Very good, it is settled, we tackle it, we two. How long will it take?"

"Eighteen months."

"Oh, a year, say! We go armed, you know."

"Well, of course, we go——"

"I don't mean with guns—with Science—with civilization—motors, accumulators, aeroplanes——"

"Oh, I say!" went Rolls, "that's hardly orthodox, to spring aeroplanes upon Wo-Ngwanya. Still, there's no reason——"

"Oh! we go fully armed, Rolls, to meet every eventuality. Time! Time! In which case, say a year."

"Let's hope it, anyway. A million a year—not bad for R. K. Rolls!"

Cobby, who now stood pondering, all at once asked what was Douglas Macray's address.

"Hotel Meurice, rue de Rivoli," said Rolls, "or just 'Paris' will do. But—why?"

Without answering Cobby sat at his escritoire, and wrote: "Mr. Warren Cobby is about to start on the quest of his cousin, Flora Macray"—and at once, having summoned his man, sent it to the post; on which, with a look of alarm, Rolls suddenly asked: "You haven't written to Macray?"

Cobby told what he had written.

"Well—but——" Rolls said. "Myself, I'd never see fit to forewarn the enemy."

"Miscreant! The insolent licence—— Well, now he has my challenge."

Rolls shrugged. Challenges, flourishes, moral ebullitions were hardly his style, but the plain way toward an end; and in the next three weeks, while preparations were under weigh, and Cobby tearing himself out of his place in civilization, Rolls' unimaginative sense had enough to do to check the other's excess of zest and effort. "Our money won't run to it," he would say: "we don't aim to be an invading army with baggage, look. There's no chop any road in bringing arc-lamps and galignite, telephone-sets and nitrotoluol. . . ."

"To have done it, and be done with it, Rolls," Cobby said: "to be back here in Fleet Street, doing surface-tension! If we go, we go as white men, armed with the white man's wit and might—not with seven matches."

Rolls flung his hand. "Well, there may be something in it. Go your own road."

Hence, on the day of departure, cartfuls of paraphernalia lay stored for the expedition within that belly of the *Saxon*. To watch all snugly stored, Rolls, hardly yet quite on his legs, had been aboard some hours, and Cobby, at the eleventh hour, was walking alone with quick steps toward the ship along the dockside, pulled askew by a bag, when a voice said behind him: "Carry your bag, sir?"

"Very good"—he gave it to a tall man, loose-limbed, shaven, dark-haired, wearing a cloth cap, and rough clothes that looked new.

And, as they walked together along the dock-railway, said Cobby: "Where have I seen you before?"

On which the man chuckled, saying: "Not at Buckingham Palace, I'm afraid, sir."

When they reached the bustle of the ship, now shouting "visitors ashore," Cobby at once lost sight of him; but four evenings later, out in the Bay of Biscay, on wandering with "The Zulu-Kaffir Language" into the bow-regions, to watch the bow-foams wash and dash, he beheld the same man there, leaning over the rail among some steerage-passengers.

Cobby addressed him, with "So *you* are here."

On which the man touched his cap with a chuckle. "Yours as ever, sir," he said.

But there was some difference now about the man somehow, in air, or face. Cobby, just aware of a difference, could not say in what it lay—was not interested.

V

THE VOLUNTEER

BEFORE Madeira was passed, Rolls had become an institution in the ship. He liked winds in his hair, and dismal nights, when he had the vessel and the universe to himself, and sometimes the saloon-dinner was his breakfast, he was such a night-fowl, scarcely mixing with the others—differing from Cobby, who let himself be led into whist-drive, sweepstake, saloon-ball and nonsense-talk under the quarter-deck awning. Cobby's name as a scientist having been known to two or three beforehand, as he saw himself sought after, he lent himself. But he wrote in his diary : " This is dreadful ! This emptiness and waste of days. But what idle people ! and I as idle as any of them. May Spiciewegiehotiu perish. . . ."

A voyage to the monotony of whose routine the engines' throbbing beat its monotonous bâton, until the eighteenth night, or nineteenth morning say, when Cobby in his sleep had a feeling that he was not alone, and woke in a flurry to find the ship pitching, and there on his bedside, when he switched on the light, Rolls seated, gravely meditating on a cigar between his fingers, wind from a porthole winnowing within his bare hair.

" I'm not sorry you've woke up," he said. " Myself, I always sleep with my state-room locked, and *you* should ditto. There's an enemy aboard, look."

A new idea for Cobby. " How do you arrive at that ? "

" Just played it on me," Rolls answered—" narrowest escape ! I all but disappeared over the side—' suicide whilst of unsound mind.' On blowy nights I generally go up the foremosts shrouds, to have things to myself a bit—was up there a couple of hours—

rough stuff—dark—then got down. When I stepped upon the lowest ratlins, they weren't ratlins any more—cut through. Feet pitched overboard, dragging off my hand-hold ; my clutches missed one, two, of the upper ratlins—didn't miss the third, or I should be well astern by now. But if you're born to be hanged, you never will be drowned."

"Incredible licence!" breathed Cobby. "Who can it be?"

"There you beat me—though I expected he'd not be far, and have been on the look-out to spot him. Anyway, here he is."

"And are the ratlins of fibre or wire?"

"Wire-rope those foremost ones."

"Then he must have a hack-saw. We will report to the captain, and have a search——"

Rolls threw his hand. "Of course, the captain will know ; but that says nothing. The bottom of the Atlantic is a fine place to hide a hack-saw—if he didn't nick it from the ship's chest, to put back after using. . . ."

This thing sensationalized the last three days of the voyage for everyone—an eruption in the uninterrupted.

Only one man—a steerage passenger—did not appear in the assembly before the captain in the saloon : him the doctor reported to be ill—had pharyngitis—inflammation of the mouth—had to be interviewed separately in his bunk.

"Which of them would that be?" Rolls asked himself.

Knowing all the faces present, and unable to recall the absent face, he conceived a curiosity to see it, and the next morning took down a bottle of "bub" (rum-and-milk), in a neighbourly way to the sick one—"something to keep the blues out, friend."

He was warmly thanked with nods, but no words the sick mouth being covered with a cloth, the brow bound about with a towel, so that, as it was dim within the bunk, Rolls got only a dim impression of a nose.

Nor was there time to repeat the visit : now loomed on the ocean's brink that bluff bulk of Table Mountain, with a table-cloth of cloud, and silver dish-covers of cumulus-mounds, the mass of which, Rolls told Cobby, recalled to him " The Elephant " of Wo-Ngwanya ; and soon, as the liner warped up, all was an arrival-scene of greetings and luggage, tips and kisses, pith-helmets with pugarees swinging, sunshades and white attire fluttering, all in a colonial tone of its own, dotted with various shades of blackness trotting to and fro, from Hottentot copper to Madagascar blacking ; and here Rolls was sweetly at home, Cobby following in his wake from quayside through custom's officer to dock-gates, asking of Rolls in respect of the Malay who drove them to Cape Town, " Why does the being vociferate so needlessly ? " to which Rolls philosophically answered : " Has a fare—sort of song of joy that he blows off, look, like the hylobates ape : let him howl away."

And when the sun sank, and sudden darkness invaded Nature, said Cobby, thinking again of his Malay : " We might have done well to travel in our cab, which was as breezily speedy as the train is lazy. How long, Rolls, before the expedition actually starts out ? "

Rolls said : " Three weeks, I reckon."

" Ah ! three weeks. . . . Well, provided I am back in Fleet Street in a year—that is your undertaking."

Rolls' eyes twinkled. " No, not undertaking. You wait—you won't be so fidgety when Africa once gets its grip on you. Even this Karoo seems to you now a meaningless reach of plain, doesn't it ?—no trees, nothing—yet it has a meaning of its own—says something, sings something. Hark ! heard that cry ? A riet-bok that is, out there in the vastness and darkness—never saw a train before : I know it from the way he whistled. He's living still away back in the bottomless pit of the geologic ages, that chap : all this Africa is. Wait till you see a geologic river washing solemn along, with the hippo's nostril

snorting out in the choppy mid-channel: he's pretty old and knowing, that cove. But, of course, we'll be looking as lively as we know how: let's only hope we're not crossed and balked any road, for the enemy has a long arm. I'm all-out gallied now about not getting to see that sick man's face aboard. I wonder what's wrong with his mouth?—'inflamed mouth': never heard of that disease in man. I looked out at the landing, but no sign of him."

Snuggled in a corner, his eyes closed to the world, Cobby murmured: "I think I know who he is—saw him first in England. Some poor man—carried my bag along the dock."

"And was anything wrong with his mouth then?"

"Let me see—Yes, I fancy now that he spoke with some impediment or effort."

When Rolls next spoke, he got no answer: Cobby was asleep.

Then by way of the corrugated townlet, past the rock-kopie, the stead of the Boer alone in the world with his ostrich-kraal, the journey was to the Gold-town, where at once Rolls threw himself into the work of getting together map and plan, man and automatic, inspan and biltong, bead and button, medicine-chest and waggon-box. And all went merrily well, save at one point—the sweeping-in of at least one other white, for which he was eager. He got two, indeed, but both failed him.

The first, a transport-rider of Natal, a fellow of grit, though addicted to "square-face," and now down on his luck, readily agreed, said to Rolls, "The thing I'm after—a dart into the interior," and a bargain was struck. But soon afterwards Rolls, on entering Botha's Yard in Commissioner Street, where the waggons were, spied his transport-rider head-to-head in a confab with a broker: and the next day the fellow vanished.

It was the same with the second, a Texan—Kimberley adventurer, up-country hunter, who dreamed in millions, though to-day broken in boots—he had

all but fixed-up with Rolls, but then cooled off, and when he suddenly began to throw money about, Rolls understood that this one, too, had been soaped.

"They're at us again," Rolls said, when Cobby got back from a trip to a *vlei* up north, whither two mining-engineers had taken him to shoot veldt-duck and antelope. "They reckon I'm two wide-awake and chock-full of six-shooters to be knocked out from a corner over here, where I'm a cock in my own yard; but they aim now to make us a pair of lone hands among a crowd of blacks——"

"It doesn't seem to me of great importance," Cobby remarked.

"Blacks do such things as mutiny, don't they?" Rolls demanded.

"Well, there are still three days to try in. If you come across any possible man, strike hands with him on the spot, then send him out of the town beyond temptation."

Which was what Cobby himself did on the following evening; for, as he was smoking on his hotel stoep, the light of day then dying out, a man appeared before him—the man whom he had seen at the dock in England, and then on the liner; and said the man: "Here we are again, sir! I got it from a certain party that you are after a white for up-country trek-king, and I'm in it, if you'll have me—stones, gold, ivory, makes no matter to me."

"Sit down. . . . When did you come to Johannesburg?"

"Only yesterday. Been in Cape Town."

"What brought you to South Africa?"

"You should ask what took me to England. I know South Africa—Australia. Fortune-hunter—I haven't always carried gentlemen's bags for a bob." He chuckled.

"You can shoot, then, probably."

The man snatched a revolver from his hip-pocket, and negligently shot a peach from a tree in the yard.

"Good in this half-light"—Cobby presented some vegueras—"have a cigar."

"Thanks—I'm in misery—can't smoke——"

"Not well yet?"

"Better—not well. You hear how I talk—across a hot potato."

"Yes, I can tell that there is something. Healthy otherwise?"

"Oh, yes, I'm all there." He chuckled.

"Talk Zulu?"

"Some. Can cluck some Hottentot, too."

"Well, come inside: I'll send for my partner, Mr. Rolls, and we'll discuss details."

But Rolls, sent for, could not be found; and Cobby, apprehensive lest this one also should be got at, struck a bargain, asking, as he wrote a contract: "What is your name?"

"Douglas Macray."

Cobby's pen paused in air. Looking at the man, he muttered, "Singular"; and added with a smile: "You are not, I take it, the millionaire of that name?"

"W-e-ll, I'm afraid not, if there is such a millionaire. But never say die, sir! I may yet stand in his shoes."

Now, frowning in an effort of memory, Cobby asked: "Where *have* I seen you before? *Some where.*"

"Dartmoor jail, sir." He chuckled.

"No, I never was there. You?"

"Well, no—not actually inside. I wouldn't say that the traps have never been after me, but they never yet got me."

Cobby smiled on him—liked a certain hardihood, stoicism, and cheery frankness which was about him.

"Well, sign," he said, and, this done, wrote a letter to a Boer at whose stead he had slept during his hunting-trip, a letter of no importance in itself, only written in order to get Macray, who was to take it, out of reach of schemers. "We others will perhaps have started before you get back," he said, "but you

will readily pick up our spoor. Here's the cash ; and now I will come with you to the yard."

There Cobby saw him horsed and off, then walked back to his hotel, wondering what had become of Rolls.

It was not till an hour later that Rolls came in, looking sour, to tell the tale that, having gone with one of the Square auctioneers to drink a bottle of fizz, they both had got imprisoned in a room—something gone wrong with the catch of the door, which in the end had had to be forced.

In view of which odd disease of the door-catch, when Cobby told of the bargain with the man whose mouth was sore, Rolls' countenance fell.

"My God, Cobby," he said ruefully, "you might have waited for me to crop up."

"Why, though ?" Cobby asked.

Rolls had no answer ; but felt ill at ease.

"And what do you think his name is ?" asked Cobby.

"Beelzebub—I shouldn't wonder," said Rolls, strolling about.

"Douglas Macray."

"Same thing as Beelzebub," said Rolls. . . . "But you mean to say he had the devil's cheek to give you that name ?"

"Oh, no cheek, I think ; that chances to be the fellow's name : he's all right."

"Well, you're the newest of new chums, and no mistake ! Haven't you learned yet to mistrust your man, Cobby ?"

"The man is all right," Cobby obstinately repeated.

And, as arranged, the expedition duly started the next afternoon ; but not till nine in the night, when it had outspanned twenty miles up in the interior, did Macray with new hunter's-swag and outfit ride in ; on which Rolls and he, for the first time, looked into each other's eyes.

VI

A QUESTION OF TEETH

THE three were eating an evening meal after the afternoon sweat and trek through leagues of timber, when Cobby remarked: "Here we are within sight nearly, and the plan of action still undetermined"—a browner Cobby, upon whom some beard had sprouted, in moleskin trousers now, and leggings above velschoenen, upon which the bivouac-fire shed beams in a dimness that was an island of dimness within the dismal Pacific of the night.

Rolls began to answer: "Well, we have the rough plan"—but paused, suddenly adding: "Another fight on!—that's the *utshwala* (millet-grog) working," and, springing up, he trotted off into a still dimmer dimness, where a little mob stood watching a Swahili and a Pondo duelling with two club-sticks in the midst of a bigger mob, who lolled and squatted, enjoying the day's end, and at that lip the calabash tilted, and that puffed at the hashish ("dakka") pipe, and that snub-nose sucked up snuff.

Rolls stamped at the fighters: "Stash that racket!" but still the two kerries acted, rattling anon like castanets, and the clattering antlers of antagonist stags rattling together.

Only when Rolls, roaring at them anew, drew his revolver, did the duel consent to stop, and then the Pondo dropped something at the Swahili's ear, to which the Swahili consented with nods, so that Rolls understood that the feud was still to be settled elsewhere.

"Silly brutes," he grumbled, sitting anew to his tin plate: "we can't afford to have 'em cracking one another's skulls up here"—for just "here"

was cannibal, there had been two pitched laager-battles, flow of blood, and the sentries standing out in the dark now about the bivouac were not there for nothing.

"Well, you were saying——" Cobby said, mopping his forehead and a chest all exposed at the opening of his dirty shirt, the sleeves rolled up.

"It's only details that remain over," Rolls answered, casting an under-glance at Macray, who lay on his elbow, eating with evident effort and unease: "the dart is to get within the three enclosures one dark night, chloroform 'our mother,' and bring her off like a sack of mealies."

"You'll never put that over," Macray observed.

"With *your* help we will," Rolls answered, with a sullen eye askance on him.

"Well, no doubt I'm a host in myself," Macray chuckled, ever jocular, in spite of pain.

Now Cobby irritably loosed his belt with its sheaf-knife and six-shooter holster, saying: "But are you aware that the administration of chloroform occasionally ends fatally, and that we have no right——"

"Oh, now for a London sermon!" Rolls muttured intolerantly—tempers here not being at their best! for God caused a mist to rise up out of the ground, a steam of miasmas and malarias, good for snakes and the great venom-insects that came sailing in gay dress out of the tangle of undergrowth to glare at the flame and dance devil-dances to it, but bad for man.

"May I not express myself?" Cobby asked, glancing aside at Rolls, who sat by him, his back propped upon the same mass of banyan-trunk that had dropped there a century gone, to gather its scab of mosses and rot with all the rot of the tropic forest, within which, side by side, vied riot of corruption and riot of life, and the tribes of life thrived on the festering of the unburied dead.

"How many people die of chloroform, old man?" demanded Rolls. "One in a million? And what are we here for but to take a thousand bigger risks?"

"Very good," said Cobby. "I concede the chloroform—let that pass. But there will be sentries round the royal precincts! How about them?"

"We stab the sentries, baas," Macray said, looking at Cobby with one eye winked.

"There'll be only four or five," Rolls said. "Shoot 'em with air-guns—or stab."

Now Cobby frowned. "That is," said he, "we become assassins."

"Put it that road," Rolls curtly said.

"Very good," said Cobby hotly, "be an assassin, if that is to your taste—on the understanding that you never shake my hand after."

Macray chuckled; and Rolls sullenly said: "We'll rub along without much shaking hands—just do a bow, look," and, doffing his opulent hat, he bowed elegantly to the forest, to show how elegantly he and Cobby would bow together.

"I am in earnest, understand," Cobby mentioned, in the act of lighting a pipe, and Rolls then said, patting his friend's arm: "Hamba gachle (go soft): nothing is going to be done that you don't cotton to—not likely! We'll have a regular indaba (debate), and see how it pans out."

He finished eating, drank, lit a cigar, and in that reign of stillness they two smoked together under a gloom of foliage hung with bugle-blooms of blue and ruby, with festoons of bindweed, barbarous triumphs of beard, while anon a baobab-fruit fell with a knell's message, or a branch crashed, or a monkey rushed with shrieks, a hyena pealed the laughter of madness afar, a mule smote a hoof, or a laugh sounded from the crowd of blacks.

And presently Macray emptied his can of utshwala, remarking: "Here's to sleep for little Douglas of that ilk—dog-tired," and picked himself up.

"How's the mouth?" asked Cobby.

"Bad to-night. Good-night, inkoos." He passed away beyond the dying fire-light into the dark.

The others sat still, relishing their sense of full stomachs, and the comfort of smoking.

And presently Rolls: "Those two blacks mean to fight it out."

"Try and stop 'em," Cobby muttered.

And presently again Rolls: "Not bad, to-day's trek, considering the timber and the axes going."

"Fine," Cobby muttered.

And presently again Rolls: "We have sneezing-gas, tear-gas, chloroform, to deal with the sentries."

But Cobby did not answer, the pipe had dropped out of his mouth, his forehead nodded; and now Rolls raised him, saying, "Come on, we're done up," and led him away—they two, by a rule of Rolls, sleeping always together in a spot selected by Rolls, never in the waggon-cartels, now occupied by some wounded blacks, the two this evening sleeping between a rock and a screen of creepers that dropped like a drapery from the rock's top. On the opposite side of the bivouac-glade Macray lay.

But Rolls, who slept like a bush-cat, with one ear awake, was soon sitting up, listening to footsteps that stole near; and he was quickly away, tracking the two duellers, who, carrying their kerries, went prying for some starlit spot to fight out their quarrel.

Rolls, intending to catch them red-handed, and impress them with his omnipresence, shadowed them some hundred yards, then, becoming sick of it, was now about to call and order them back, when his prowling foot encountered some soft obstacle, upon which he switched on the torch-light, to see it.

It was Macray there—asleep.

Till now Rolls had never seen him asleep; and now saw a difference of expression in the face, sufficient to arrest him—the same difference which Cobby, too, had noticed between the Macray of the dockside, and the Macray seen on the steamer.

And though Cobby had not fixed in what the difference lay, Rolls at once did, on catching sight of a plate of top-teeth, lying near the sleeper—though the light-

beam had not been on Macray one second, when up he started, his palm for a moment covering his mouth in an instinctive impulse ; and now his eyes and Rolls' met and lingered together a little—both faces pale. Then Macray chuckled ; and Rolls said carelessly : " Those two silly niggers—sorry to disturb you," and halloed after the two.

Within ten minutes Rolls was back in his sleeping bag : but in that interval he had seen much.

He did not lie down : sat thinking and thinking. " That's where the sore mouth comes from," he muttered : " some mouths can't stand plates of teeth ; this plate may be ill-fitting—perhaps hurriedly made in London for the occasion. Never has had the time to get a new set, nor never has given the mouth time to get used to this set—takes 'em out every minute he's alone, I reckon, they worry so ; claps 'em in when needful : never seen without 'em. I see. Always shaved like a dandy in the primeval forest. I see. ' Douglas Macray '—he gave that name : devil's cheek —and cunning. I *knew* that I'd seen that face somewhere ; couldn't drop to where—photo—witless. Otherwise, thank God, I've had all my wits in camp, or there'd be no Cobby now, and no R. K. Rolls now. . . . Well, the fittest will survive."

Tired as he was, Rolls hardly slept that night, there in the reign of rayless darkness between the creepers and the hollow of the rock, noting when the man-eater roared afar, when the mouth of the ounce yowled to the universe for food, when sentries went out, came in. . . .

The question was—to tell Cobby, or not to tell ? and toward morning Rolls answered, " No—not now ; after the happening of what has to happen." Cobby would command : " No killing ! " and Rolls would obey, but Macray, who was out for killing, would not obey. Rolls, too, now, was all for killing. There are venoms, there are wrongs, which only blood can wash out, which only death can solve.

" One attempt on my life in that Exchange Bar

at Johannesburg . . . two in London . . . one on the steamer. Low-down thug-work. If I forget, may God forget me."

At dawn he shook Cobby with a rollic, " Out of it, lazy bones "—rollic and tender, for where he loved he loved, and hated where he hated.

And at breakfast all was as usual, save that both Rolls and Macray tended to more than usual merriment, which, in the case of Macray, may have been due to the absence, for the first time, of the plate in his mouth ; *à propos* of which Cobby asked : " What is different about you, Macray ? You are like a man who has shaved off a moustache."

Macray answered with a chuckle. " Top teeth gone —gorilla knocked 'em out with a club in the night."

This was a jest—like Macray's jests in general : cheery, merrily meant : but pointless, clownish.

" Is it a question of teeth ? " Cobby said : " yes, that *is* it. So what has really happened ? "

" Only this—for seven years, off and on, I've been trying to wear false teeth, and last night I chucked them for ever off me into the bush. Bravo ! the eaters will be eaten by an ostrich. Now I can dine with my gums and defy the world. That was what made my mouth sore, baas."

" I see. Why didn't you ever mention it ? "

" Oh, he was shy before the ladies," Rolls flung off from over a bowl of meal and " amasi "-curds, which he was earnestly eating.

" Still, the teeth did rather heighten your beauty," Cobby remarked to Macray : " and as you look now I seem to remember seeing you in some dream—somewhere—where *was* it ? "

Macray chuckled. " You remember, inkoos, the night you caught your sister under the oak with a man ? *I* was that man."

At which Cobby lowered his lids, silent, many of Macray's jests not being quite to the scientist's liking.

And now the forenoon trek, to the singing of the blacks ; and the noontide rest ; and the sun's altitude

taken ; and now the afternoon trek, which revealed that the forest was not really infinite, but had a limit where open country basked in the sun, and a river rolled between rows of crocodile-snouts, where flamingos in their crimson uniforms stood like sentinels who all have lost a leg in the wars ; up which river the trek went three miles to find a drift, christened " Crocodile Drift " by Rolls over two years gone ; and, crossing the river, they came upon the ashes and charred remains of a cannibal kraal, which, Rolls said, was but one of many of which the Wa-Nganwya had cleared that region ; and now the field-glass, scanning northward, could see a mirage of the mountain-range which bounds Wo-Ngwanya on the south.

And that evening the three men held their *indaba* on the plan of action, seated on a hillock in the shade of a yellow-wood tree, whence they could see eastward the reeds of a lagoon on a plain peopled with game, deer in thousands, giraffe and buffalo, crane and egret, the three smoking together like friends, with a jest anon ; and no one could have guessed the suspense and tension that was between two of them.

Rolls said : " Understand that failure spells *final* failure for the failer. I know the girl : if you attack her, she fights ; and if, as usual, she wins, she gives you time to sigh one last prayer : it's woe to the conquered there, look. What follows ? That we shouldn't stake all upon one throw. And we shouldn't try it on without experiment first. Let's rehearse the whole fakement."

" And if the rehearsal fails," Cobby said, " the play never comes off."

" Yes," answered Rolls, " if we are not all in the rehearsal. So let Macray and me go forward alone, get into the sigodhlo, ascertain what's what, and come back to you before we all pitch into it together. If we two come to grief, there'll be still you left."

Rolls' and Macray's glances lingered together, while Cobby flushed a little, saying : " But why am I being put up in cotton wool ? "

"Because yours is the most valuable life," Rolls quietly answered.

"Yes"—from Cobby—"but I am deliberately on an adventure, risking that life: I cannot permit you and Macray to incur greater——"

"It must be so, isinduna," Macray said, weighing his Colt's meditatively on his palm. "Rolls knows the road: *he* must go; you or I must go with him; and he and I both vote you out."

"You're outvoted, Cobby," Rolls remarked.

On which Cobby: "Oh, very well, since you see fit. If you two fail to come back, I shall go after you at all costs."

And Rolls, stretched on the grass, gazing up into the yellow-wood: "Oh, one of us is sure to scrape through."

"Sure," echoed Macray, throwing up and catching his automatic, these both knowing that, if either came back, he would come alone, each knowing that the other knew.

VII

DUELLO

LATER in the night when the outspan lay asleep, Rolls, lying near Cobby, scribbled on a pocket-book leaf, under the beam of an electric torch : " Cobby, I reckon to come back, but no knowing. If not, know that this Macray is *the enemy*. *Without* me, and *with* him, I figure it up that your best course would be to throw over the whole fakement, and get back home. Good luck to you and me, Cobby.— R. K. R."

This he put into Cobby's tobacco-pouch, knowing that Cobby, who smoked only in the evening, would not see it till the next evening, when Rolls and Macray would be well away.

Macray, on his side, knew that Rolls would warn Cobby ; but when at breakfast Cobby's manner toward him was as usual, he concluded that Rolls would only let Cobby know after the departure from camp, and he saw why. Rolls, then, would *write* it, and place the writing where Cobby would be sure to find it : and Macray spent an hour after breakfast in thinking where that would be ; till, in opening his own pouch, he thought of Cobby's, of Cobby's smoking only in the evening. . . .

He then watched till he saw Rolls away at the waggons, and, going promptly to Cobby, said : " Give me a pipeful of that Boer 'baccie."

In a minute he had Rolls' note out of Cobby's pouch, and presently was reading and destroying it.

Before noon, with elaborate secrecies, he had buried a packet—a cardboard-box in oilskin, of which he had a jealous care—at the roots of a particular tree ; and soon afterwards he and Rolls started out together.

And that night they two were plodding northward

afoot forty miles from the camp, two lorn forms lost in a vastness of broken and rolling country, pathless, manless, plodding in the misty twilight of the sickle of a moon quite new, now sinking, and about four miles before them the mighty fact of mountains towering, brooding in their citadel of obscurity, mystery and muteness.

The two horses had lately been left knee-haltered; and Rolls remarked: "We might safely have ridden on: not much light from that moon; and those outlook posts of savages are only efficient for spotting troops, not small bodies."

"Aha," Macray went.

Few had been their words, and no word so far of enmity, of quarrel. Two strangers travelling together by chance in a desert would speak as these spoke; but ever *these* moved shoulder to shoulder, one never an inch behind the other, as their horses had moved shoulder to shoulder—a long strain on the alertness of nerve and brain and eye and hand. Both wished to God that it was over.

As over open sward they walked, through belt of timber, toiling up hillside, moving by the lonesome pool and the bitter bittern brooding, sending atrot the troop of little duiker-bok, hearing the wild cat whine, there were long silences between them. Their throats dry at that tension, each hoped for, yet dreaded, the setting of the moon, with whose setting his life might set.

"Cobby's not a bad old sort," Macray suddenly remarked: "nobody would hurt Cobby, except in defence of Number One. What made him take on this job? Just the money in it?"

"Not much"—from Rolls: "that's what made *me*. Cobby's after seeing justice done."

"Aha."

Then again that silent plod of hide-shoes over grass and dust and rock; and presently Rolls: "We're climbing all along, even when it looks as if we weren't."

"Oh, aye"—from Macray.

"I know where we are now. One of their outpost vedettes will not be two miles from here."

"Aha."

Five minutes more, and they stood confronted with cliff-wall some thirty feet high, which seemed to stretch interminably to east and west, dropping here or there a waterfall; as to which Rolls remarked: "Yes, I remember this bit now; there are some passes going up—we'll try this way"—turning westward to the left; and over sickly sward they walked close before the cliff, until they came to an opening in its face.

The natural rock-path that ran up here being steep, strewn with stones, narrow as a man, here one of the two had to have his back to the other, and in a flash both understood that the moment of action had come: and the quicker lived.

"Hands up!" cried Rolls like thunderclap, in the same second that Macray, without a word, fired at him.

But Rolls had been by the hundredth of a second the more thunder-prompt, and Macray, when he fired, was two Macrays, one firing, the other throwing his hands up, conscious of a muzzle already at his breast, so that his bullet shot upward. . . .

"Drop your revolver," ordered Rolls.

The revolver dropped: and Rolls, keeping eye and muzzle on the foe, stooped to pick it up; but his hand not chancing to encounter the gun, he glanced down to see it; and in the wink of that instant Macray was upon him, grabbing Rolls' revolver-wrist, tumbling Rolls over to the ground, dropping upon Rolls.

There they struggled together—a struggle that could not long continue for lack of wind, it was so cat-o'-mountain in the franticness of its activity, life the victor's prize. Twice while it lasted those solitudes heard reports of gun-fire—Rolls firing; but without hurt to the other, who had the advantage of being much the younger, of being considerably the bigger, of being uppermost to begin with: advantages over which that inveterate toughness of Rolls might not have prevailed, if Macray had not let go Rolls' left

hand to snatch his sheath-knife, and finish it. In that same second Rolls had him overthrown, undone, and under. . . .

His knee on Macray's arm, his grip at Macray's throat, Rolls glared close into his foe's face, grinning at him, his throat rasping as hoarse as Macray's rasped.

Then he sprang up, picked up the two revolvers, dropped his own into its holster, dropped Macray's and Macray's knife into his knapsack, took from the knapsack a skein of window-cord, cut off a bit, and said: "Get up."

Then, Macray up, he said: "Hands behind your back."

On which Macray, as he obeyed, chuckled, or attempted to chuckle, uttering: "Anything to oblige!"

Rolls then went to bind Macray, saying: "One movement, and you're a dead man."

"Wonder I'm not that already"—from Macray.

"Well, and whom do you owe your life to—for the time being?"

"To the best of all possible R. K. Rollses apparently," said the unconquerable Macray.

Rolls laughed. "Not much! Not likely! Bad shot! You would be in hell now all right, if it had been only me. But Cobby don't cotton to 'assassinations': and I want to go back able to shake his hand and make him a truthful report of what took place."

"Here's to old Cobby, then, and to whatever gods may be. Life's damned sweet; and I'd sooner be a crossing-sweeper at Charing Cross than a Lord Mayor in the realms below."

"Prize to-night, then, since you like life"—Rolls tied the last knot on the wrists—"as I do. To-morrow night that moon will be a bit fatter and higher at this hour, but one of us two won't be knowing about it. We'll fight it out in the morning light, look. Come on."

He moved now up the rock-path, and Macray followed, relieved and frivolous in a reaction from the

long strain, anon making a remark meant to be jocular and mocking, though he did not fail, as bidden, to look at the moon with a new interest and wistfulness ; and on they plodded over country that still increased in steepness, until the moon was down, soon after which another moon—at its full, this one—came into their view, this being the light of a fire shining in the circular doorway of a hut perched some seventy feet up in cliff-side bush—one of the outlook posts of Wo-Ngwanya.

This point being only eight or nine miles from the capital kraal beyond the mountains, Rolls meant, if again victorious the next day, to visit the kraal alone the next midnight, and investigate the possibilities, in order to report to Cobby, he having with him cord-ladder, air-gun, and every essential for " the rehearsal " ; nor did the first step to this end—the slipping-in past the vedettes—present any difficulty : on such a night, in the absence of searchlights, a company of soldiers could have prowled into the pass unnoticed.

Here Macray crept foremost, with Rolls' muzzle at his back, lest he should deliberately rouse the outlook by any sound ; and now the way was up and up the endless stair of that tower of mountain-rock, that looked a suitable boundary for a land, not of Wa-Ngwanya, but of titans and archangels, and now they were crawling north-west through some gross grove of wood, the dwelling-place of gloom, and now were moving north-east along dizzy cliff-brinks within theatres of crags, trackless grandeurs, with organ-voices of waters raving everywhere, and always a noisy north-wind thwarting them, so that toward midnight they halted exhausted on a ledge where the rock above rather overhung them, and had a bluff which a little protected them from the wind ; and here Rolls, having produced from his knapsack biltong, biscuits, Johnny Walker, tied up Macray's legs, untied his hands behind, tied them before ; and there, seated, they ate and drank together.

" Here we sleep," Rolls remarked between bottle and lip.

"Or pretend to," said Macray, feeding his mouth two-handed.

"*I'll* be sleeping all right," Rolls muttered.

"Maybe I can roll you down the precipice during the night—good idea: the rolling of Rolls. Or knock out your brains with one of those stones."

"No, you won't be doing much stirring," Rolls answered. "I respect you some, Macray: an unscrupulous brute, born without a God or a conscience; but you have brains."

Macray reflected on this, and then, deciding, said: "Yes, all that's true. You're a man who can see, Rolls."

Rolls was now trying to light a cigar within his hat, but, after several failures, muttered: "Oh, well, here's to bed," and lay close under the crag.

Macray, too, lay, and both looked up with that pang of a look that may be the last at clouds that scudded southward over the vault, and, sailing northward, all the swarm of the constellations, steadily sailing together, like a navy that steadily sails and sails.

But, though the winds were touched with chill up there, within some minutes Rolls was asleep but for an ear: only Macray lay wakeful. And see him at one time, tied as he was, drawing himself softly a little to peer over the edge of the ledge, and ponder upon what he saw. . . . Then he lay anew under the rock-shadow, wooing sleep; but had just succeeded in drowsing, when he was roused by a shout . . . a shout of horror.

He started up, staring at Rolls, whom he saw staring also.

"Bad dreams?" Macray asked suddenly.

Rolls did not answer.

Macray chuckled: "Conscience, Rolls. . . ."

Rolls dropped again upon the rock, terribly trembling. He had dreamed that he was careering headlong down the ravine—a dream so *real*, and so dismal in mood, that it was hours before he could sleep anew—in fits and starts.

Hence the dawn of morning came upon him rather shaken, rather out of sorts. But showing no sign of it, save a slight pallor, he sprang up—summoned Macray—muttering: "Come, let's have it over"—set free Macray's legs.

"Well, what's the rules of the game?" Macray asked, smiling—pale now, his eyelids twitching—but steadily smiling.

Rolls looked along the ledge—some sixty feet long, some four broad, rather concave in form, bluffing out at the north and south ends; and glancing over the edge in that grey of dawn, one saw only jags and crags and small trees, and no bottom but mists steaming; and on the opposite side of the ravine, fifteen feet to the east, a like scene of rock and tree.

"You will stand at that north end," Rolls said. "I at that south. You will hold one end of this cord low, and I'll slide your revolver down it to you. When I see it reach your hand, I fire."

"Bah!" broke bitterly from the other's lips: "and you talk of wanting fair-play to please Master Cobby! What's this but assassination? While I'm getting my revolver from the cord I drop dead—of course."

Rolls saw this—moved some steps away, reflecting, and came back saying: "Well, I'm game to meet you, if you have any better plan."

Macray had a twitching of the eyelids, as in all his instants of high-pitched egoism. He said: "You want fair-play. Well, you bind my revolver to my right wrist, muzzle-backward; and I bind yours to yours with the same knots and length of cord. Then you tie a long cord to the two bindings, and retire till the cord is taut, which will be the signal to start unbinding with tooth and nail, and the quickest wins. Not quite fair to me, since I have more gum than tooth: but I'm game . . . you want fair-play. . . ." His eyelids twitched.

"What's that—Mexican?"

"Yes; Mexican."

Rolls anew moved some paces away, weighing it

with a wary eye, and came back, saying: "Well, maybe we'll make it that road: I'll figure it up; we'll have some breakfast."

"God, man, get it over!" cried out Macray, staring at him.

On which Rolls, suddenly pallid with passion, flashing fire from his eyes, said sharply: "Damn it, yes, get it over it is. No doubt I'm as smart a man as you at any game. Sit down."

And, as Macray sat with that pallid smile of his, Rolls in a flurry of action again tied his legs together, then searched him from hat to shoes, found a penknife and a flintstone, tossed them away. He then drew out the magazines from both the Colt's, and proceeded to free Macray's wrists; then cut two equal lengths of cord, with one of which he bound one of the Colt's to Macray's right wrist, muzzle backward, tieing up the trigger, making the knots with all his strength; and now, presenting the other Colt's to Macray, permitted it to be similarly bound to his own wrist. Which done, he tied the ends of a cord nearly equal in length to the ledge's length to the two bindings.

"That fair now, Douglas Macray?" says he.

"All serene, Rolls," says Macray.

With a slash of his knife Rolls now freed the other's feet.

"*I* will go south, if you like," said Macray, rising upright.

"What's that for?" asked Rolls.

"It is lower, and I am the taller—not that it matters." His eyelids twitched.

"Makes no matter to me either road," said Rolls.

On which Macray stepped backward southward, as Rolls replaced one of the magazines in his own Colt's, and, stepping backward northward, tossed the other to Macray.

With their eyes fixed on each other, they increased the distance between them, until the cord was taut: then instantly bent to the untying.

Macray, however, made no actual attempt to untie,

but, while pretending to untie, stepped two paces forward, and, bending sideways, picked up with his left hand a flint-stone, of which there were many scattered about the ledge.

Of this act of treachery Rolls, with one watchful eye aside, was conscious; but though flints can be rather sharp, he felt no keen fear that the edge of a flint, picked up haphazard, would chance to get through the several thicknesses of cord that entangled the triggers, before he could rend away and loose his own entanglements with tooth and nail—a task well in progress already.

But Macray had no intention of cutting his entanglements. . . . The instant the flint was in his fingers, a shout hopped out of his mouth, as he leapt from off the ledge, and a shout hopped out of Rolls' mouth, as he found himself tugged forward askew, and falling down the gulf.

Macray alighted upon another ledge which he had observed quite thirty feet below, a ledge twenty feet long and half as broad, where a dwarf mohnono-tree, with leaves of silver, sprang out of the cliff-side: to which tree he clung with an arm wrenched to dislocation by the arrest of Rolls' descent, clung during several seconds of frenzy, while with the flint in his left fingers he sawed to sever the cord that connected him with the dead; and still when the cord was cut he clung on dizzied, drunk, distraught, watching the history and incidents of the body's voyage during ten seconds which seemed as many minutes, saw it wheel and vault from point to point of rock, saw it hurled by the earth's reeling upon the opposite wall of the ravine, and disappear into the sea of mists.

Macray fell upon his face, and lay there trembling. "*My God!*" he said.

But within fifteen minutes he chuckled in his gullet: it lived, that dear ego of his, that Number One that he had a fancy for; and "damn you deep!" he muttered to the dead.

However, he was a prisoner there on the ledge,

he and a chough's chicks; and it was only after hours of efforts and very perilous failures that, by ramming fragments of his tree into crannies of the crag, he managed to regain the ledge from which he had leapt.

There he ate and rested; then, taking Rolls' knapsack, plodded on northward for the capital of Wo-Ngwanya, to tell a tale there.

VIII

THE SIGODHLO

TWO mornings afterwards Cobby wrote in his journal: "My sentiment toward Rolls would better be named affection than liking: an affection based on respect. I have known no intelligence whose judgments in general were more trustworthy; and though his moral sense was not dainty, being as rough-and-ready as the whole Rolls, his substance was sound as a nut. Innate, moreover, in the man, strange to say, was a soul of poetry, a relation with the soul of Nature—a thing without song, or voice, or, I think, much emotion—hidden behind hides of commonness, but really there, and rare. My friend; my dear friend. Never shall I forget the sense of loss, of solitude, the pang of heart, when, near seven last night, I saw Macray riding in alone over the plain in the moon's light, leading Rolls' mare by the rein, and I knew that the moving Finger had written and moved on, as when the funeral is over now and done, and man has gone to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.

"And so perplexing the way of it! It appears that the two abandoned their horses too soon, walked a long way toward the mountains, and stopped to rest in a forest, where Rolls desired to sleep, but was disturbed by a roaring, which Macray said was a lion's, but Rolls maintained that it was an ostrich's; and at last, exclaiming 'Oh, stash it!' Rolls dashed away to shoot the (supposed) ostrich. Macray heard Rolls' revolver pop, then an outcry, and ran to Rolls' assistance, to find him dead under a lion and lioness, which Macray contrived to kill, after dislocating his arm in climbing a tree.

"Such is Macray's account of things. But who could ever have predicted that that Ulysses would

die in that silly way—by a lion. He himself would have derided the prediction, I think; and there is something in it which the brain will not realize. Moreover, I remember hearing my friend say that he at least could always distinguish between the roarings of lion and ostrich; nor do ostriches usually roar at so late an hour. Very strange: I do not understand; must only accept.

"Well, farewell, you brave R. K. R.: gone; but not to be forgotten.

"Then, alone, Macray walked on northward, following directions that had dropped from Rolls; passed over the mountains; and at two in the morning actually effected an entry into the town, into the royal enclosure, and on to the grounds of the royal hut. So he reports. And his report is anything but heartening. 'We will never make her, baas,' is his comment, this *her* not referring to a lady, but to an enterprise. Three sentries, it appears, at the royal gates, each a giant. So—'take my advice'—I am now to throw away so many months of effort, to turn tail at the very gates of the enterprise, and to 'be quick about it,' ere the Wa-Ngwanya get wind of our presence here, for then 'all will be up with all of us.'

"This irritated me, and I said to Macray: 'By no means up with us. Understand, Macray, that one white man armed with the science of Europe is mightier than all the Wa-Ngwanya, backed by all the blacks of Africa—given the opportunity to use the tools of his science. Am I to take it, then, that you are losing nerve?'

"'Not a bit, inkoos,' was his nonchalant answer: 'if you are for seeing it through without Rolls, here am I. But I'll cry to see a head like yours chopped off. You should be killed by electricity—something scientific—not by a nigger's bill. Turn back, isinduna—take my tip.'

"'On the contrary,' I answered, 'I will go on.'

"'Good egg,' he said: 'I admire your spirit, if not your cunning.'

"I wonder why he chose this word 'cunning'—a quality which he himself may not lack, perhaps. Certainly, I have a sense of some unknown quantity in Macray, an x, a mask—my fancy perhaps. Throughout the trek he has shown himself ever jovial, cheerily enduring, cool in danger, quick to learn, versatile, serviceable, exhibiting no little initiative and efficiency as hunter, soldier, and traveller, so that I have congratulated myself on the bargain I made with him at Johannesburg. But there has never been any love lost between him and Rolls, I could see; and, as for me, something in him undoubtedly repels something in me. However, we are now bound together for good or evil. A week hence will test his mettle. . . . Meantime, hunting, improving the food-stock, and maturing a scheme for making the attempt when the moonlight is over, I cautiously excogitating each detail. I have determined to move the expedition no further northward, since it appears that many of the blacks feel nervous of advancing nearer the Wa-Ngwanya, whose reputation has bred terror in their breasts. And now, thou Pallas of Good Counsel, be my goddess. . . ."

But on the seventh day thence, when the venture was to have been made, Macray stated that he was "seedy" from his sick arm, so it was not till the ninth night that, all being at last ready, the attempt was made, Cobby taking with him Macray, two Zulus, and a mule, which, like the men, was shod with rubber. Overcast and dark as the night was, they contrived, soon after abandoning their animals, to find that same pass up which Rolls and Macray had travelled, and, not without the aid of electric torches, crossed the maze of mountain shortly after one in the morning.

Macray acting as guide, they found out a town that lay drowned in darkness, and by an hour's prowl round its outer stockade, came to its back part, Cobby estimating that the place, though more compact and peopled, was hardly bigger than Midhurst or Petersfield; and Macray whispered that from that back

part to the sigodhlo, or royal kraal, was hardly a quarter-hour's walk.

When, from the mule's back, Macray had cast a rope-ladder, its grapples wrapped in rubber, the four were speedily in the outermost round of street, and thence prowled down a street that led pretty steeply centreward. No sentinel in all this part—a fact which astonished both Cobby and his blacks; and not a sound in all that gloom, only remotely somewhere the dumb boom of a drum going, and far off a baby clamouring, and presently far off the exclamations of a dog barking at the arising of some event in the reign of nothingness, and presently the shine of a fire in the round doorway of a round hut, and in there, suckling a child, a woman seated, quite close to whom they moved unseen.

Then an enclosure, woven of fine tambuti grass, over which they climbed, without needing to fall upon, chloroform, bind, gag or gas any guardsman, for none appeared. Inside—a village within a city—stood residences of royal son or cousin, of the late King's ladies, of Court-officials, roomy intervals separating the residences, every residence being a group of huts slumbering within its own enclosure, grossly embowered within its own grove of equatorial foliage and flower, which breathed out a sigh to the night-breeze, so that here the darkness was even deeper, because of all these arbours of large-leaved boscage, palm and sarsaparilla, banana, tree-fern; and it was beneath a big fig-tree near the middle of the ring that the marauders paused to take their bearings.

Here Cobby whispered at Macray's ear: "No sentries?"—for at this oddity, although it had an aspect of luck, he felt nevertheless a vague apprehension.

"Funny thing," Macray whispered him; and one of the Zulus whispered: "Something wrong! Take care!"

At the same time Macray was whispering: "See that junk of bush straight ahead? In there she should be."

"*Come*," Cobby now whispered, and went headlong, bent, prowling keen and quick.

IX

THE ROYAL HUT

PROWLING close outside the enclosure of the sovereign's domicile under gross shadow of foliage which overgrew, the four slowly approached the south portion of the enclosure. Now, however, there was alarm—a dog starting to bark.

On finding out the dog, a small thing tied near the stockade—*why* tied there was not clear—one of the two Zulus tossed it biltong, and Cobby then, in his zest for chloroform that morning, pressed a cloth over its nose, and shut it up.

In two minutes more they came to the gate of the stockade. . . .

Here three at least of the four were quite certain of finding sentries, but there was none.

"What does it *mean ?*" Cobby whispered to Macray.

"Very rum !" Macray whispered back. "Shall we turn tail ?"

Both the Zulus already had revolvers in hand, *expecting* now an ambush.

Now Cobby, raising himself on the stockade, peered over, to see before him, a long way off at the bottom of an avenue, the round doorway of a hut, filled with fire-light, like a dim full-moon.

And with a heart now fast beating he dropped back to his feet, whispering keenly, "Come, try the gate . . . this may be luck. . . ."

His torch-ray, switched upon the gate's edge, showed two thongs for raising two latches of wood within : this was all the fastening ; the gate opened easily outward ; and they passed up a little ascent that had rows of stones imbedded in the earth to serve as steps, then on along an avenue all ambushed in blackness of darkness, having among the bush, on each side, five

idols, mighty forms, of which the marauders were just conscious in moving close under them, these being the only sentinels visible; and in the distance ahead the steady disc of light, a dim eye, soundless, mysterious, that seemed to drowse and dream.

Cobby and Macray crawled foremost, and near behind them the two furtive Zulus, all eye and ear, all nerves and alertness.

Then, to the scandalizing of everyone, Macray dropped his revolver . . . and loud it sounded, an outrage on that hush. . . . Some moments more, and it was as if someone muttered somewhere in the night. . . . The men stood arrested by it: but it was so low, and so momentary, a rumour from nowhere, that none was certain that it was not some birth from the night's disquiet, from the stirring of wind and tree. Cobby moved on, and soon, lying on his face, was spying into the lighted opening. . . .

He saw a round room, big as his own drawing-room at home, with a vaulted roof supported toward its centre by two roof-trees of red-wood (mopane), ten feet apart, quite nicely fashioned and polished, between them in the roof being a smoke-hole, and under this a dying fire of logs; hanging from the roof a few charms—snake-skins, ivory elephants; over the floor a profusion of rugs, with some gourds and stools well polished; and round the walls swaths of tapestry of fawn-skin soft-tanned, all embroidered with elephants in beads of "gold-stone," hanging from the ends of pegs; and between them on the wall shields, and sheaves of spears. But not all this did Cobby see, his gaze being riveted on two girls who lay on beds of rugs at the foot of the roof-trees, one on each side of the fire, their feet toward him, their faces as yet very vague to him, though it was evident that the one to his right with the ivory anklet was white, that the one to his left with the brass bangles was black: and motionless they lay.

Here, then, was the instant, and here a case for the judicious application of chloroform: so Cobby

whispered " *the black* " into the tympanum of Marcay, handing bottle and cloth, he having carefully trained Macray to apply anæsthetics, while he himself held bottle and cloth for the white.

And now he was impetuously in.

As little light came from the fire, he, on finding himself over the white, switched on the little ray of his torch, and saw her well, lying half on her side, with one arm cast naked above her head as in careless slumber, the rest of her wrapped in a kaross of yellow cloth embroidered everywhere with black elephants ; and there, just as Rolls had once described her, was the lane running up the side of her high brow betwixt the wings of her hair.

Cobby, breathing " By heaven ! " started, as a dart of admiration pierced his nature.

In that same moment there arose a sound—behind him—something like a snigger, like half a snigger smothered, which, as it slipped out, was finished. Cobby glanced alertly round at the negro girl, who, however, seemed asleep, then again at the white, whose lips, as if in sympathy with that snigger, had now moved into a smile, the vaguest ghost of a smile —but still visible.

The truth now pierced Cobby's consciousness that these people were not really asleep—a fact chilling enough to the heart. There he stood pallor-struck—saw all lost, his party trapped ; but, as he was not sure, and as retreat was hardly his way, he was still about to venture upon doing what he was there to do, when, as he stooped to her, the Queen's lips opened a little to say " now."

" *Hands up !* " shouted Cobby in Zulu, spinning to the four winds with his revolver pointed at a circle of nine giants who spurted out upon him from behind all the swaths of wall-curtain ; but no hand was put " up," and he did not shoot, understanding in a flash that that would be useless bloodshed, since, whichever way he span, some were at his back, while Macray seemed seized with paralysis.

One shot, however, *was* fired—outside the hut—by one of the two Zulus, who were pounced upon by an ambuscade outside; and this man, after shooting another in the abdomen, made his escape through the bush of the close. But when that shot sounded outside, Cobby was already on his back, panting under a foot on his breast and another on his neck, his arms bound to his sides with many rounds of hide, his poor cloth and bottle of science lying scattered from his hand, exhaling a smell of carbohydrates; two stood by Macray, holding his arms; while the Queen and Sueela, seated on their beds, Sueela with big ox-eyes, her head all kid's-horns of hair sticking out as in curling-pins, inspected the activities of the men, three of whom had kindled at the logs torches which illumined the room with a smoky glow.

But now one from outside entered the opening, and, on hands and knees, uttered the report: "*Bayeté!* Kindayana shot in the belly; the one that shot him gone off; another one captured"—and instantly the Queen's countenance changed. Springing to her feet, she went ranging about the chamber, resentment on her brow; but stopped to say over her shoulder to the messenger: "Carry Kindayana to Mandaganya" (a doctoress); on which the messenger went running out, bent so headlong down, as to suggest one tumbling on his face, or seeking in haste a flea on the floor, while Spiciewegiehotiu again ranged the room, and Sueela, expecting squalls, followed her goings with ogling ox-eyes, with her fingers expanded like a goose's toes, with a pantomime pull of face, as when a baby does "Oh! bogies!"

When the Queen next stopped, it was to point a bâton of ivory at one of the nine giants, and say: "You run and tell his highness the Commander to send a mounted messenger to the captain who has gone to destroy their camp: if they point out the one who shot Kindayana, the captain let ten of them live; if not, he kill them all"—and, bent headlong, seeking a flea, this messenger went running, while

Spiciewegiehotiu stood with a shoulder propped upon a roof-tree, her feet crossed, a palm on her upper haunch, like a birch formed of long curves perfectly outlined by a kaross bound in by a simple string at the waist, and falling to the ankles, a flimsy thing, accumulation of raiment not being the mode among the ladies of this community; and she pointed her sceptre, saying to another: "These two and the one outside to 'The Elephant' for now"—but at the same time made a silent sign that this was not meant as to Macray.

The feet that had been on Cobby then lifted, stirred him to stand up, and he, scrambling upright, faced Spiciewegiehotiu, though, as he was in a half-dark, with no torch near him, she hardly saw his face.

"What you want here, you?" she called to him.

Guessing her meaning, he answered in Zulu with a monarch's head and offended lids: "I am here, not for my own good, but for yours. It appears that I am your cousin, and your rightful guide and guardian. You will have to do what I tell you—if I live. Soon I shall learn to gabble your jargon, then I will tell you."

She, apparently, understood at any rate some of it, for with a nose of deadly disdain pulled at him, with her sceptre uplifted to hit him, she stepped promptly upon him, crying out with the flying tongue of a scold: "You think you have time to learn Se-Ngwanya jargon? You think so? Vultures know how black man taste; now they want to know how white man taste. If the man your man shot die, Ah! you watch vultures eat your tongue before they eat your lungs."

And down the bâton of ivory came, or was coming, for his head, when it halted suspended: now she saw his face, that rock of his sovereignty, upon which the waves of defeat and danger seethed in vain.

But it was not respect that stayed her blow, but something else—Memory. For quite a minute of silence she eyed him; then a left finger summoned one of the torch-bearers, and for quite another minute

of silence in the light of that torch her eyes pondered upon him, while Sueela, leaning forward, stared with wonderment at her.

In those moments it seemed to the Queen that in some dream somewhere she had seen that countenance, known its meaning, and within what household and home of mood it lived and moved—Cobby, in fact, having a very strong resemblance to his Aunt Jane, Spiciewegiehotiu's mother, a stronger resemblance than to his own mother, as Spiciewegiehotiu more resembled his mother than her own.

Spiciewegiehotiu turned away without a word; stood again against the roof-tree, with lowered lids.

"If you care anything for Reason——" Cobby now began to say, when she, with sudden fretfulness, shook her face intolerantly, saying: "Take these men out of my sight!" And at once this was done.

X

"THE ELEPHANT"

COBBY, Macray and their Zulu, after being taken by a guard of seven through the gate of the Queen's park, walked southward down a slope, till they came to a palisade half a mile long that ran east and west, where a wicket was opened to them by a picket posted there.

Now they were at the top of "the Square," a place (called "awna," or "kotla") enclosed with palisades, long as Tottenham Court Road, with a river running along its east side, an area big enough to contain the live-stock of that district in case of invasion, an expanse of emptiness containing scarcely anything save, here or there, some tremendous old tree gone hollow, and rags of grass. But after stepping through that wicket, the party passed by a platform of earth, hard-trodden, three feet high, on which were pillars of wood supporting a roof of reeds some fifty feet long, under which canopy were three steps of stone, leading up to an arm-chair of stone, and before this throne two semicircles of stools, concentric—this being the judgment-seat and council-police of the Queen, as shown in the drawing of the town by Cobby :

Then, south of that platform, they passed by another object—a cube of earth three feet big—very red then in the torchlight, for here heads fell. And then another platform with pillars and a roof—the market ; and thence the tramp was past the guards of the great gate, and along country-road to the right.

Without pause the seven giants chuckled and chatted, as they sauntered on, and anon differed in opinion and waxed warm, full of other interests than their prisoners ; but Cobby walked silent, and when Macray said in his light way, "Well, we seem to be

in a bad old way, baas," and received no answer, he, too, walked silent with his thoughts.

Cobby was offended that Macray had not joined him in holding up the nine with his revolver in the royal hut; nor could he understand why his and the Zulu's arms were bound, and not Macray's.

But what was heavy now upon him was not his own fate, nor yet Macray's, but his camp's—those forty-seven whom he had led to death, for he had gathered in the hut that they were to be wiped out. But how possibly could Spiciewegiehotiu know where his camp lay in the vast of Africa? How, too, had she foreknown—with so much preciseness!—his attempt upon her that night? By nature slow to suspicion, he did not conceive the idea that Macray, after the death of Rolls, might have come to Spiciewegiehotiu, and told her all.

Down a slope westward the way was, with here or there a private kraal or farmstead that the eye could divine in the dark, where a cow lowed, a bull highed, or shrilled, and, outlined southward on the sky, the mountains, that were no more mountains now, but only hills; down, then up, and down, till they came to a lake, in which Cobby suddenly found himself wading knee-deep, and close before him cliff-wall, sixty feet high, passing away into darkness north and south. Imagining that this cliff was washed by the water, he wondered whither they were going, until, on coming to the cliff-face, his captor pressed down his nape to make him stoop, and, as he entered under the cliff, he understood that this must be the "Elephant"-rock, supported on "legs," of which Rolls had told him.

Twice, as he walked on, wading, he happened to let his head lift a little from the awkward stoop, and twice bumped it; but after some minutes of it, the roof of rock rose somewhat, and thenceforth became a dead level a foot above his head, though still his jailer moved with a little stoop, just shaving the rock with his ostrich plumes.

On and on the walk was, the water quite warm, as if having a volcanic warmth, nowhere rising higher than the thigh, the bottom a bottom of rock; and here, where no breath of breeze seemed to stray, the torch burned steady, shedding a blood of slaughter over the jet-black surface of the water, showing anon patches of lotus and anon reaches of lichen—only one torch now, for after some time Cobby realized with a start that the party of ten had become a party of five, Macray and four of the guard being no longer in it; he had been all preoccupied with the strangeness of the place in which he now found himself straying—could not rid his brain of the impression that the place lay profoundly buried in subterranean depths, the abode of gnomes ruminating in there the opium of a reverie that never ended, brooding for ever in the bosom of that home of muteness, into whose gloom no glim of the sun or of the moon ever entered; and he understood that farther than the flight of fancy that roof of rock ran on and on, and under it always that night of water, farther than fancy flies: so he had had no notion at what moment Macray had ceased to be near behind him; it had been silently done . . .!

A mile of that drowsy water went coiling away in waves like waves of oil round his wading thighs, a thousand times, and again a thousand times, in a silence not now broken by the blacks, because of the babble of echoes from the rock-roof that mocked all attempts at talking; only Cobby, twice turning to his Zulu, said: "Courage, Panda!" and was answered with the smile of a dauntless man.

And now the monotony of that wading and wading in a drowsy air saturated with water-vapour made Cobby drowsy in a reaction after his late agitations; he longed, as if he had drunk a drug, to stop and drop, to squat in that gloom of the lukewarm lagoon, and nod under the load of the roof of rock—did, in fact, begin to nod, when his head again struck the roof, which again came down a little for a hundred yards; at the end of which an area of radiance on the water

came into sight, and then two stone steps rising out of the water at a place where the monotony of roof was broken by a vaulted room, in this room being a doorway shaped like a bow, and at the bow-string the two steps, the radiance on the water being shed from two torches at the doorway: and up the two steps, green-grown and slimy, the five stepped, stooped into the doorway, and went stooping up a rock-corridor to a rock-hall, in the middle of which, surrounded by nut-torches (oil-nuts stuck on skewers) twelve men lolled, smoking, snuff-taking, playing toss-and-pick-up with marbles.

All about this hall were piles of logs, and there was a fire under a pot, the smoke going up a hole tunnelled through the rock—chimney and ventilator to the whole. Those outer steps also were obviously artificial, "The Elephant" having been more or less modified by man into a prison and fortress: Cobby called it "The Elephant and Castle."

Up leapt the twelve to crowd round the umlungo (white)—a colour respected here, because of "the white lamb washed," but *she* was much less chromatic than Cobby, nor had they been at such close quarters before with that colour. One fellow just touched Cobby's chest, then glanced at his finger-tip; one said: "Many of them—somewhere"; and another said: "Eheh (Yes), there's all sorts of things somewhere; me hear somebody say there's people with three eyes"; a third, agaze with hands on knees, observed: "Na! there is blue in his eyes, there is red in his hair, his lip is pink: me wish his nose was only green, he'd be pretty like the rainbow"; "Poh! let me alone, he is best as he is," answered another. "He is no umfagosan (base-born)," one said: "see how he look"; and one asked: "Where he spring from? What he come for?" but the prisoners' conductors were not careful to explain, one of them now ordering: "Untie their arms, and put them in the big prison to the right."

"May I not have my torch?" Cobby asked of

this one, who had Cobby's torch, revolver, knife, bag, hat.

The giant shook No from his head.

"It is not a gun, just a torch," Cobby said, then with a sudden movement switched on the light in the giant's hand; upon which the giant dropped the thing like hot iron, springing backward.

Cobby then picked it up, and, switching off the light, presented it to him, saying: "It is harmless."

But the man now shrank from it. "Can you make it shine again?" he demanded.

Cobby switched it on.

"Na!" and "Na!" now sounded, all crowding round to see this thing under heaven.

"Now make it stop!"

"Now make it shine again!"

"*You* make it," Cobby said, showing him how, and when he rightly pulled the switch, the light shone even for him.

Then he knew joy all over his face; and round now the torch went among them, their heads crowding upon it, crying out "me next!" everyone having a try, until it went back to the original holder, who stuck it with decision within the band of his moocha, as who should say: "this thing is *mine*."

He got from Cobby an underglance of reproach. . . .

And as Cobby was being led away, the man ran, put the torch and Cobby's hat with haste and stealth into Cobby's hand, and walked away out, poor but honest.

Cobby and the Zulu were then led along one of several corridors that rayed from that central room—a long corridor upon which rock-rooms opened, out of whose moody vaults floated voices in talk, moans, calls to the warders passing, voices of man and of woman, until the echoing steps bent into a second corridor to the left, where Cobby and the Zulu were soon made to stoop into a room, and the warders fastened across the door a bar, over or under which a body could not pass.

Cobby then examined the room with his torch, saw that it was circular and lofty, thirty feet across, and in it three men asleep on the rock-floor ; in the centre of the floor a hole a foot across, into which when he put the torch its beam burned upon the surface of water beneath.

The air was heavy and hot, moist, noisome, an offensive smell pervading the place ; but, tired of their night's effort and failure, the two fell down and slept soundly.

XI

DZINIKULU

WHAT fate now awaited him, awaited his camp, Macray, Panda (the Zulu with him), Cobby asked himself many times a day—though between day and midnight was not the least difference in that place, where the eyes strained in vain to descry the hand, however crazily nigh they stared ; so that, just to see light, Cobby would switch on his torch-light anon, always with a miserly economy, like one who sips liqueur, lest the little dry-cell, running down, should leave his eyeballs quite bereaved of light.

How the prison-people measured time he did not know—in that room of his time was abolished, but for the clock which the stomach automatically became, the prisoners all acquiring a pretty precise consciousness of meal-times—two meals a day, as it seemed, being given, when three men brought a board supporting calabashes, and a torch, the prisoners peering for them at the bar across the low-arched opening ; and always the same food in the calabash—a mass called " poospoos," but much of it, and described as " very nice " by Cobby, who in his diary writes a detailed account of its preparation—corn-meal being put into a pot pierced with holes, and this pot hung inside another in which meat is stewed : so the steam from the meat penetrates and cooks the meal, which then, as poospoos, is eaten.

But weeks of it : how many Cobby had no idea ; and in white light now he saw his fault—hot-headedness, failure of restraint, he having talked too hotly and haughtily to a sovereign, in the hollow of whose hand his life and his followers' lives were—a sovereign who was also a savage. Reflecting on it now, he

wondered that he still lived even that death-in-life there, with his back against the wall, his legs out before him, his hung head staring at nothing. Here one did not determine the surface-tension of bubbles, nor count the droplets in a cubic centimetre of the water-vapour that one breathed and breathed. Europe was a dream now.

And for how long ? for years ? for life ? till madness came ? He had hoped that he would be " tried," as Rolls had been, would be given a chance to speak, to plead, to appeal to human reason ; but in the course of weeks this hope forsook him.

Meantime, however, his situation was not like " solitary confinement," for here was much fellowship : he spoke with his Zulu ; the three Wa-Ngwanya conversed together ; and one of these, an elderly man of rank, whose name was Esingwe, imprisoned for agitation against a law, adopted Cobby as a listener, and, finding out Cobby whenever Cobby flashed the torchlight, would scramble to sit near, and give once more at great length the tale of his sorrows and wrongs. In vain Cobby again and again protested that he understood scarcely anything of it ; the speaker did not realize this ; and still the machine that spoke spoke on, speaking not so much to be understood as just to speak. Moreover, the speaker had found out that the Zulu at least understood much, as a Spaniard understands some Italian, and at special points he would insist that the Zulu should explain to Cobby, he waiting, nodding, until the explanation was made, and then continuing the endless tale. " What a fate, this tongue and this tale ! " thought Cobby when it had long gone on ; and then—suddenly—one day—it came like a revelation—he found himself understanding it all !

" Now I am understanding him ! " Cobby cried gladly in Se-Ngwanya to Panda : " curious ! the power comes, not gradually, but suddenly."

" You understand me now ? " said the gossip. " Na ! now me tell you all, all ; and now you send

messages to the Sinder-ngabya : maybe he let you out "—this Sinder-ngabya (or " Guardian of the Sad ") being a dignitary to whom prisoners had the privilege of sending messages by an official who came at intervals to collect messages ; and thenceforth Cobby did send messages, saying that he had come with a good motive, that, anyway, Panda, who had only obeyed his commands, might well be pardoned, while, as to the men of his camp, their innocence was complete.

But he never had any answer ; and that baleful air began to sap his vitality.

However, soon after the fourth of his messages, an event arose for him—a visitor.

This was Dzinikulu, one of the late King's three brothers, of whom Spiciewegiehotiu had beheaded two.

Mooning as usual against his wall, Cobby saw an invasion of light, and one of his warders peered in, calling eagerly : " Umlungo ! come ! " and he whispered in a flurry : " Prince Dzinikulu to see you—na ! You ukukonza (do obeisance) : maybe he do good for you " ; and, drawing Cobby out to stand in the corridor, he ran off.

Then all in torchlight the royalty came, brow-bound with ivory, beplumed in crimson with the egret's tuft, " and saluted me with no little dignity in quite a Zulu style " (Cobby writes). " His mantle not being wetted, I divined that he must have come under ' The Elephant ' in some kind of boat rather than on a man's back, for Dzinikulu is a very big being, man of forty-eight, say, with a mass of full-face, and eyes from whose corners peer intrigue and experienced caution. He stood with one leg cocked forward, and said to me : ' You send messages to the Sinder-ngabya ; the Sinder-ngabya report them to me, as the Great-great gone away from Eshowe on a tour to visit other towns : so me come to hear your complaint.' Now he waved away the torch-bearers, saying to them : ' Count six-three (*i.e.* nine) six hundred times (*i.e.* 216 times), then come back ' ; and as

soon as he and I were alone in darkness, he said in a lower tone : ' Trust in me : maybe you and me think the same things.'

" (My translation of their words, by the way, is not, in one sense, exact ; but since it is based upon my knowledge of the genius of their speech, upon my knowledge of how an English language invented by them would be spoken, it *is*, in another sense, exact : for whoever has translated a tone, has translated everything. What is amusing is that some writers on Africa make negroes speak in a lofty sort of tone like Ezekiel, with verbs ending in ' eth,' rather confirming what I often think that untrained intellects have a kind of liking, a preference, for untruth.)

" He then wanted to know of me exactly with what objects and hopes I had come to Wo-Ngwanya, and I told him frankly all, explaining how my object was the Queen's good ; on which he, compressing my arm with his fingers, stood silent, until he said : ' So you say : how she to know that it true ? '

" ' From the fact that I have taken so much trouble to come to her,' I answered.

" On this I could hear him chuckle in his gruff way, and mutter to himself : ' Maybe, if she believe all that, she go ! ' and I understood then that I have an ally in Dzinikulu, who hankers to see the back of his Queen, that he may reign in her stead.

" ' You will tell her all that ! ' he said close and low, compressing my arm : ' maybe she believe ! Anyway, me and you bake bread together against Mandaganya and Sueela : me and you together beat everybody.'

" ' Who is Mandaganya ? ' I asked him.

" ' Witch-doctoress—mother of Sueela. Spiciewegiehotiu foolish with love for Sueela : so Mandaganya powerful. Two months ago Spiciewegiehotiu say publicly she will take for her husband Sandelikatze, Sueela's brother, the executioner. Everybody clap their hand on their mouth ; everybody say Spiciewegiehotiu go too far, too far, too far. Next full moon she marry Sandelikatze. Sandelikatze is dirt !

Sueela is dirt! Mandaganya is dirt! Everybody say Spiciewegiehotiu must be mad! She care nothing for Sandelikatze—Sandelikatze is dirt! but she in love with Sueela—na! she marry Sueela's brother to please Sueela. When she do, all Wo-Ngwanya go against her. Then me and you bake bread together—wait, wait. Sueela and Mandaganya will fight hard, for if Spiciewegiehotiu go down, or go away, what will such dirt be? Corpses without heads. But me and you fight hard, too; me and you beat everybody.'

"I then said to him: 'Yes, but when? Can you set me free? I am becoming ill, my teeth may decay, my clothes are filthy. . . . How long have I been here?'

"He said 'a month,' adding: '*Me* can't set you free, but me think you go free. If Spiciewegiehotiu was going to kill you, she kill you long ago: she have some reason in her head not to kill you, me not know what it is. Soon she come back from The North; you send her message; beg her pardon——'

"This I cut short, telling him that that I should never, never do.

"'Proud man—na! induna,' he went. 'Still, you get free—me think so. Before the Queen went away, the old guest-house in the sigodhlo was pulled down, now a new one is put up, and a certain person said in my ear that Sueela said in his ear that she have reason to believe that this is done for you—not likely, but maybe so. When the Queen come back, me going to counsel her to cut your head off, and be done; then, maybe, she set you free.'

"All this, insubstantial as it all was, comforted my misery not a little; and I then proceeded to sound him about the prospects of Panda, about the camp, about Macray. And now a terrible blow was in store for me: for he answered unconcernedly: 'No trouble about your camp: they all killed, except six-four (ten). Your Zulu who shot the Mo-Ngwanya that night had his right arm broken, then his right eye burnt out, then his head torn off.'

"It made me sick. Enfeebled as I was, I had to cling a little to the savage. To think that Woman can be so hard and heartless . . . !

"I asked him if the shot Mo-Ngwanya had died, and he answered: 'Eheh (Yes), he died. Belly went rotten.'

"'But I, too, was threatened, if he should die!' I cried: 'I shall not be set free! And all my men, but ten, ruthlessly massacred for nothing! How unreasonable! How brutishly unmanlike!'

"To this he answered, patting my arm: 'No, you wrong. Strong mind, Spiciewegiehotiu. When she have reason, she kill, kill, kill; but she not kill a fly without reason. She and me not friends, but—strong mind, eheh! clear, not brutish. You come to take her away; she capture you. Suppose she have reason not to kill you: you think she going to leave forty of your men round you to help you take her away? No, she kill them. She spare ten; sell them as slaves; take the price of them for herself.'

"'But my waggons!' I cried, 'all my implements and baggage——!'

"'Oh, they all there in the royal park,' he answered, 'you never get them again. She love wealth—cattle and cattle's worth; grasping; close-fisted—na!'

"'She will not know how to use them!' I cried. 'And Panda! Can you not set Panda free? *He* has done nothing! And Macray—how about Macray?'

"'Sir Caray?—"Caray" we call him—— You trouble about him?'

"'Why not?' I asked him—'my servant and comrade?'

"'Comrade?' said he in a tone of irony, very surprising to me; nor, when I demanded of him why he questioned that Macray is my comrade, did he at once answer, but presently said: 'Councillors and princes cannot gabble everything like gossips before a hut-door: a string pull them here, and a string pull them there. Maybe when me and you know one another better, me tell you something. For now,

you no trouble about Sir Caray. You in prison, Caray living like a headman. Spiciewegiehotiu give him a kraal in Sitiwe (a west district of Eshowe), five huts in his park, seven *incekus* (Queen's-servants), she give him twelve bags of money, a horse, two cows, goats, rugs, wood, guns, cloth, from her store-huts. He go to speak with her, and she receive him : but they say it is Sueela he go to see. He go hunting down the river ; he lounge about the town ; he get a lot of girls round him, he make them all cry out laughing, and hide their eyes, he give feasts at night, me hear he drink a lot of *tivala* (liquor), and they say two girls gone wrong after him. But it is Sueela he want : he glance at Sueela, Sueela glance at him. Sueela no good—loose like her mother before her. She look aside upon a man with a mocking eye that make a man fancy she scorn him : if he not daring, he not get her ; but, if he daring, he get her. Not yet eighteen—five lovers : me could give you their names—na ! count them off on my fingers—one, two, three, four, five. You tell Spiciewegiehotiu that, she fly into a passion, she call you liar ; but everybody know it, except Spiciewegiehotiu, and Spiciewegiehotiu know it, too, inside her nose. A certain person said in my ear—— They come for me ! You wait—you get free ; me and you bake bread together ; me work for you.' He added louder, as the torches approached : 'Me report your case to the Great-great,' and, mutually saluting, we parted."

XII

THE QUEEN'S RETURN

AFTER this a stretch of time that seemed like five or six days passed for Cobby, and then again an unexpected torch invaded his darkness. In its light he saw a white face—Douglas Macray's, and with Macray and the warder a servant of Macray's burdened with a buck-skin bag, which was pushed into the prisoner's room, while Macray, stooping in, cried out merrily: "Well, baas, here we are!—in the stations of life to which it has pleased God to call us. I prefer Bond Street myself, but this ain't bad for a month or two."

The torch being now gone, Cobby switched on his flash-light a little to see his "servant and comrade," who, smoking a cigar, had flung himself on the floor by the bag.

"Not bad for *you*, apparently," Cobby said, sitting before him.

"That's what I meant, inkoos. Oh, well, fortune of war, you know. Fact is, old Spicie of the throne has fallen head and ears in love with me——"

"Absurd!" cried Cobby high, with a laugh.

"Why so, baas? Girls in Europe say that I'm rather a good-looking boy."

"Oh, quite; but you misconceive the quality of mind of the lady——"

"What do *you* know about her, isinduna? She hates you like poison."

"Well, and I hate her like poison!" leapt from Cobby's mouth, and then he felt that this was childish.

"That's all right, then," said Macray. . . . "No, she ain't in love with me really, nor yet I with her. Handsome thing—but lives in an enchanted castle, too much trouble to get at, let her go to the devil: it's the Sueela gazelle I've got my gun on. Spicie's

coming back from the country to-day, couriers have come in screaming that she is near, so I went to a nigger that they call the Sinder-ngabya, and managed to get permission to go to the waggons, now in her park, to get you some cigars—here they are in this bag, with a mass of fruit and things. . . ."

"Good, good," muttered Cobby, "and another torch, I hope, you have brought, and clothes, and matches——"

"Oh, Gee, I forgot about matches and things——"

"Then, how, Macray, am I to light—— ?"

"Here—I've got matches : take these."

"And a toothbrush, I hope——"

"Oh, Gee, I never thought of toothbrushes. You don't need a tooth brush in Wo-Ngwanya, baas : the niggers clean their teeth by eating nuts and hard foods. Look at me—*I*'ve got no top teeth, and get along all right."

"I see. So I in all things am to become a copy of you—is this what you so calmly contemplate ?"

Macray chuckled. "You might do worse, inkoos : here am I living like a nigger prince—Edward, the black prince, say, and you like Jonah in the 'Elephant's' belly, with no chance, I think, of being vomited out."

"How, though, has this come to pass ?" Cobby asked, peering without seeing : "I don't understand. Or, if it is understandable that I, the chief, am punished, and you, a secondary, pardoned, why is Panda in prison, and you free ?"

"Ask me another—a woman's whim : I was born lucky, thanks to the immortal little star that winked and worked over my birth-hour. Besides, the girl by habit is down on foreign blacks who attack her : I must tell you that the Zulu voorlooper who shot her bodyguard was tortured, all our lot, but ten, killed, and——"

"I know," Cobby said with a bent head.

And at once Macray sat up in the dark, full of interest. "Oh, you know," said he : "how do you ?"

"I was told."

" By one of the warders, no doubt."

This Cobby did not answer, understanding that Dzinikulu's visit was secret ; but this silence gave the secret to Macray, who had come mainly to learn it ; and he now bluntly said : " You have had a visit from Dzinikulu, baas. Now, haven't you ? "

At the indelicacy of which insistence Cobby answered with a puckered brow of protest : " Don't you gather that I do not desire to speak of this ? "

" That means that you *have*," said Macray ; " and now I want to warn you. Let old Spicie once learn of this visit, and all's up with you, and perhaps with Master Dzinikulu, too. I may tell you that this man was *seen* to leave Eshowe in the dead of night and come toward ' The Elephant,' for, of course, there are eyes that spy for Mandaganya and Sueela : so they suspect that he came to visit you, in which case his motive is known—to ally himself with you in any plot to carry off Spicie. Now, any such plot is foredoomed to failure—I tell you so. It is true that Dzinikulu leads a powerful faction hankering to see the old royal house restored, but Spicie is going to whip him easy every time. Don't you be drawn into anything with that princely nigger. If we had a man with the experience of Rolls, something might be done ; but Master Rolls is now at the antipodes of heaven where pitchforks are all the rage——"

At which Cobby with a shaken head, shaking the offence off him, sighed : " How offensive you can be, Macray ! Dzinikulu, too, is crass, but not with that merry excess of yours."

Macray meditated on this in the dark—did not like ! but only said : " Right you are, baas—I forgive you. I think in some former existence I was a millionaire like my namesake, the millionaire, and so much fine gold made me a coarse brute, like the famous King Midas. Yet I seem to get along all right like that. . . . Anyway, have no truck with Master Dzinikulu ! death's the consequence. As it is, nobody seems to understand why you aren't dead already. Is Spicie

keeping you alive here as a sort of torture before she kills you? Lord knows! Twice I've approached her to ask what she means to do about you, and each time the same reply: 'You will see'—nothing more. *I* believe that she means to keep you here to tempt Dzinikulu into putting his foot into it, and then do for you and him together. Sueela, before going away, told her mother Mandaganya——"

"You seem to be quite in the counsels of Sueela and Mandaganya!" Cobby exclaimed.

In his chuckling way Macray answered: "Sueela is destined to be near and dear to me, baas. I never thought a nigger girl could so poison the liver of men with longing and yearning. And Sueela's a true nigger. Most of these Wa-Ngwanya show traces of an Arab origin, as the Zulus do—handsome some of 'em; but Sueela is your distilled attar of nigger: ink-black, slant forehead, flat-nose—sounds ugly, and yet, by some miracle of Spring, old Sue ain't ugly. We didn't see her well that night in the hut: if ever you do, see if that skipping kid on the hills don't captivate your kidneys. Great big head, bulging out at the temples, bulging behind, bulging everywhere—beautiful—bursting with brains; and her great ogling eyes, alluring and raining raillery upon the universe of boys; and then her figure—her neck straighter than a straight line—taller still than Spicie, and lither: from the tip of her breast to the tip of her projected toe is the long concave of one perfect curve—she seems stretched to pirouette. And see her dance!—for every caper she cuts you cut one, too, or wish to, as if your nervous system was switched on to her activity. And the health of her youth—the crimson of her tongue and gums—her row of little teeth—you know before you smell her that her mouth is sweet like south-winds of these mountains, and the sweet whisp of slime that flies from a heifer's lips. Aye, and something very venerial in the beast—Eve in excess—gross rats-bane—the Black Plague I call her. And she ain't no prude, now; it's a case of

'all right' between her and me. Not that she's a bit in love with me: *I* know what's working in her—curiosity: wants to find out what a white sweetheart is like; but when I once win her, I shall know how to hold her. The difficulty is to win her outside the town, for, if she's caught, decapitation may result. But there's a field of sugar-cane half a mile out that I have in my eye. Whatever gods may be specially made sugar-cane to grow for happy lovers—a regiment of ferrets couldn't discover the cooing two in there. Unfortunately, the edges of the leaves scratch one, and if——"

But here the lover's effusion, to which Cobby sat listening with cynical eyebrows, was interrupted by the arrival of a torch, and by an eager warder beckoning, saying: "Come! You free!"

Cobby and Macray sprang upright, both pale, Macray staring from the warder to Cobby, and back again.

"The Great-great come?" he asked.

"Eheh! She just come. She set him free."

"And Panda?" asked Cobby.

"No! only you. Come! Come!"

Cobby, his heart thumping in him, hurried to Panda to say quick and low: "Keep heart—I shall refuse to be free without you. There are some comforts in that bag—here are matches. . . ."

Then out, and along two corridors, to a central room, Macray all at a loss, saying: "Oh, woman, in our hours of ease . . ."

Then down a rock-passage to two steps, where two *sanjwes* (sort of punt) lay torchlit on the water, in one of which two household officers, braves brow-bound with spotted cat skin over their black plumes, awaited Cobby; and Macray, in the *sanjwe* that had brought him, followed the paddles and torches of the other through a league of gloom between the lagoon and the roof of rock. Anon his eyes moved from side to side, full of interest, of meditation. . . .

It was about four in the afternoon when they shot out from under the rock to the shore, Cobby's eyes

now blinded with excess of light, and when he saw the breadth of heaven, the freedom and holiday of the clouds, and breathed the bounty of the breezes, he was like one born out of nothingness into all : tears stung his lids ; he wished to kneel. But his two companions, titanic with their black plumes, and gallant with the black ox-tails in their kilts, on their legs, at their elbows, all wafted backward by the wind, stalked steadily on a thousand yards to the great gate of the town, and on into the awna, or square.

This now presented a thronged appearance, all the top quarter of it being packed with phalanxes of warriors in their various war-dress, making there a region of spears sheening in the sun, then the populace packed, then looser throngs, among whom Cobby's conductors paused, one of them remarking to him : " The Queen salute the people : we wait here."

And twenty minutes they waited, until a group entered the square through the sigodhlo gate, and stepped on to the platform. The Wa-Ngwanya being tall, Cobby could hardly see, until, to his astonishment, one of his conductors, without saying anything, lifted him bodily like a child, to see : and now he saw Spiciewegiehotiu seated in the arm-chair of stone, meditating with her fingers at her face ; standing about her two semi-circles of men, at her left Sueela, and at her right a shining being—Mandaganya—tall—shining in a mantle of snake-skin : but whoever has not seen how like silver this filmy substance beams in sunlight will hardly imagine the show and majesty of the witch's aspect.

She, stepping to the front, went down on hands and knees, and set to uttering the Queen's *sibonga*, or list of names ; on which Cobby's lifter deposited him quickly, pushing him to his hands and knees : for on hands and knees the square was now uttering *sibonga* with the doctoress. As when in a church the clergyman turns toward Jerusalem and Mecca to murmur : " I believe in god, the father, who has a son . . . I believe in the holy church at Jerusalem . . . in the

resurrection of the body . . . " and, with heads of docility bent, the worshippers murmur it an instant late, chasing his lips, and the monotone of the murmur solemnly fills the church, so these solemnly murmured with docility after Mandaganya the *sibonga* of Spiciewegiehotiu : " White Lamb Washed Come up out of the Water, Cow that Toss the Nations, Owl that Startle the Dark with Sinister Singings, Dark Cantatas, Deer that Speed Fleeter than the Breeze . . . " and so on. After which there were some movements and manœuvrings of the regiments for several minutes ; and then Spiceiwegiehotiu sprang up, stepped to the platform's very edge, stretched her mouth, and in a dead soundlessness shouted loud, with a laughing suggestion of countenance. But though Cobby was now once more upraised in his conductor's arms, only a phrase here or there was brought down out of the hollow hall of the air by some breeze to his ear. " Me come back to you ! hum, hum, hum. Me see all Wo-Ngwanya, hum, hum. Wo-Ngwanya broad like the vault of heaven, hum, hum. Everywhere doves cooing, everywhere winds blowing. . . . Winds in the hills cooing like doves ; doves cooing like winds in the hills, hum, hum. Me laugh to see it ! me cry to see it, hum, hum, hum. Me want to make Wo-Ngwanya broader still for you ; broader still, and happier, hum, hum. Now me salute you—my sons—my brothers—my sisters—my own . . . " now, overcome with emotion, she threw her arm, turning away her face, then turned again girl-like in the grip of a graceful indecision, but, failing to say anything, gave up, and tripped back, crying and laughing at herself, to recline in the throne.

Cobby's face was distorted into a sort of grin—of interest, of greed. . . .

Meanwhile, he was full of question as to whether his release had been timed, with design, that he might witness all this ? If so, with what object ? To impress him with a sense of her mass and majesty, that he might refrain thenceforth from machinations ?

Or just in coquetry to show herself dressed in her royalty ?—a fancy which so flattered him, that he even found himself wondering whether his conductor had held him uplifted out of pure courtesy, or—by instructions ? Flattering fancies, clouded with doubts and bodings. There he stood released : but for how long ? and for what reason ? "You will see," she had said to Macray : and there is the frying-pan, and there is the fire. . . .

XIII

THE GUEST-HOUSE

AS soon as the function of the royal salute was over, and the regiments had been marched away through the various gates of the square, Cobby's two conductors led him up the square through the now looser crowd, in which was now some group-dancing and much curiosity and swarming after the new face, until the three came to the north (sigodhlo) gate of the square, where, when an ivory ring had been presented to the sentry there, the three were permitted to enter the sigodhlo.

The black who had the ring then handed it to Cobby, saying : " With this you can pass out and in."

Cobby's heart started. . . .

Straight before them northward stood the gate of the royal park, and after walking upward to this, and passing half-round the royal park, they passed, still northward, up an avenue dim beneath enormous yellow-wood trees, which led them to the gate of another park : and this they entered.

Here the first thing that Cobby saw through fronds of date-palm on his right was an aeroplane-wing, nor in the gush of his gladness could he refrain from rushing to it, and there in a glade surrounded by large-leaved bush stood his waggons buried in long-grass, with all his goods, given back to him.

In his incredulity at luck so good, he ran back to ask a flood of questions, to which the giants, smiling down upon him, replied that they thought the things were to be his thenceforth ; the waggons had been taken there that day from the Queen's park.

They then led him through a grove of greenery, out of which peeped here or there a hut, to a big hut, evidently brand-new—which, indeed, was the new-

built "guest-house" of which Dzinikulu had told him. He had become aware of sounds of music, and in front of the hut found with flute and drum six men and three women, who received him with prostrations—his household-attendants.

Out of the hut floated an odour of food, and in its roomy interior he found a meal of lamb, with yam pounded with butter, and eggs, water-melon, honey, and gaudy tarts made of grated cocoa-nut tinted pink, ultramarine and morinda-yellow, and gourds of spirit, to share in all which Cobby invited his conductors. "Nor from that moment," he wrote later, "have I lacked any comfort."

He expected now a summons to the royal presence, to be told the reason of his release and of this free-handed treatment, but when two weeks passed, and no summons came, he was torn with indecision as to seeking an interview, that he might see her face, and plead for his Panda. "Near as I am to her," he writes at this time, "my park the nearest to hers, sleeping within a few stone-throws of her, breathing the air she breathes, I might be at Cape Town for all the sign I have that she is alive, save a sight of her twice in the square, the sight of her sentinels at her gate, who salute me when I go by. I can't stand it long: somehow to be in touch with her, or go mad, I think.

"Yesterday afternoon I sent her Rolls' American clock, expecting that she would, at any rate, acknowledge it and thank me; but no answer at all. Silly of me to send her that thing! whose silly insistence on ticking must have made her laugh at it and me. She will think that I am pursuing her! seeking to force myself like a hungry dog upon her notice—which Almighty God forbid. I think that what made me send the clock was the fact, of which I first heard from my Sansiwana, that she 'goes to White River to bathe'—'White River' being the name of the upper part of the river which, in the part flowing through the town, is called 'The Gut,' and below the town is called

'Black River.' But savages have such a slovenly habit in marking the hours of the day, that I could not learn from my servants at what hour she passes here northward for the sigodhlo-postern, and this may have put into my mind the sending her of a timepiece, with the idea that, if she learned to read it, and I learned the hour of her outing, I might spy upon her steps without much loss of time. I intend to-morrow to spend the forenoon in ambush watching for her."

This manœuvre proving successful, he saw her from his lurking-place go past his park in a gay troop of twelve or thirteen girls, with two bodyguards bearing cloths ; and thenceforth some portion of his forenoons was devoted to this singular species of research-work. Meanwhile, we see him full of self-reproaches for his neglect of Panda's interests, a neglect due to his shrinkings from seeming to "force himself upon the notice" of the Queen ; he, meantime, doing much roaming about the country, collecting and making drawings and photographs of specimens, investigating its geology, especially that of "The Elephant," whose configuration, he says, "is entirely due to water-action, as in the Giant's Causeway, Fingal's Cave, etc., the bed of the lake having undergone some subsidence since the age of the water's action upon the rock-roof. The water, though so stagnant-looking, is in motion, being discharged southward by a stream which flows into 'Black River,' as 'The Gut' is called when, after leaving Eshowe, it bends eastward for the sea. 'The Elephant's' area is about a hundred and eighteen square miles, the 'legs' (I have seen seven) consisting of columns of black basalt, all hexagonal, in clusters two to seven hundred yards in diameter, and from five to twelve feet high. I have twice ridden out to its west extremity, once with Macray, and made notes in No. III. One can climb to its top by an artificial stairway five miles out ; but from no point of view have I been able to notice any resemblance to an elephant. It is said to contain several hollows other than that prison within which I have

passed so many dark hours: these I shall examine later, as I have already examined (with what little technical training I have in this direction) a singular structure in the plain out at 'The Elephant's' extremity, the relics of a pyramid, nearly half as big as the pyramid of Shafra, and much more ancient (v. III.). This plain, being a haunt of a little deer like duiker-bok, easily portable, is also a huntsman's paradise, and daily tempts me out there, my stallion, Ali, being a good goer, a broad-breasted roan, obviously Arab in breed, with a ponderous battery of the feet in cantering like a war-horse; one, I hear, of a very small stud, of which the Queen and Sueela own the two fleetest specimens, 'Selim' and 'Mustapha.' My possession of him, I find, has caused quite a jealousy in Macray! to whom has been accorded one of the small native horses, many of which show traces of zebra blood. Ali thus, at any rate, contributes a little to my self-support, but still leaves me all too much the parasite of a throne, the louse of a savage's bounty. Every third morning, it appears, my Sansiwana repairs with a list of my needs in his head to a species of major-domo, over yonder within the sigodhlo, and in the afternoon the baskets, in due process, come in. It will not long do for me! She must submit herself. I have to be her master, not her pussy-cat, fed with milk. First of all, Panda: *he* must and shall be free. . . ."

Meantime, we find scattered about the diary some very heated references to the "full of the moon"—the reported date of the Queen's marriage with Sandelikatze, Sueela's brother, the executioner—outbursts of laughter which can be called mad at the idea of this marriage—threats of intervention even at the cost of life—frettings at the vagueness of the rumours that he can gather on the subject—all this subsiding when he hears that "nobody know anything but that the marriage is put off," and when the full moon passes, and no marriage takes place.

Then there is a sight of Sandelikatze himself: "I

was walking home —about four p.m. . . . with a bagful of flora. . . . Paused in the market to watch the traffic . . . the Bon Marché of Eshowe . . . from mica-schist (ground to sprinkle the hair with a blue glitter) to twine of hebiscus-fibre and rope of ifé, and soap boiled from salsola-ashes, from guinea-fowls in great numbers to frogs (pyxicephalus), and locust-powder (eaten here with honey as by John the Baptist), fish predominating, a considerable trade in this being carried on with the dominions of Daisy, mullet from the rivers, ready cooked for sale, gaudy with coloured condiments, in big basins, barracouta and kingfish from the sea—this barracouta being known by them to be sometimes poisonous, anon all a family will die of it, yet, it is so nice, they still venture. Then I heard a herald or town-cryer calling something farther up, and remarked up there a drum beating and a knot of people, whom I found to be looking on at three executions. There were five armed men, three wizards, and—may I say ' my rival ' ? my ineffable competitor ? already before whom lay the headless body of a woman ; and of the two men awaiting his handicraft, what was my dismay to find that one was Esingwe, my fellow-prisoner, the teller of that endless tale in the dark ! After his handiwork on the woman, Sandelikatze, axe in hand, his legs apart, was in the act of glancing up with darting eyes that asked ' how's that ? ' quite as Rolls had once described him to me ; but the lightness and litheness and live-wire briskness of the picture cannot be described. He was nude, but for a few strings of leather : and never saw I the human body so beautified and elevated to the plane of the ideal—I thought of the Discobolus in black marble—the clean-cut creation of the hills and dales of the legs, the levity and enfranchisement of the figure. . . . Has *she* not seen this, I asked myself ? and has he been selected as a husband only for Sueela's sake, and not in the least for his own ? I abhor a wanton. Let me go back to civilization, and forget that there are savages. . . . And yet here, I know, is the Reality

of the world: not Sussex, but the Limpopo; man being a dark animal, with a few whites by a local freak, like white horses, white mice; nor are meadow-cows and polo-ponies the reality of the animal kingdom, but gnus and crocodiles and the black ant. But what dismayed me in this scene was, firstly, the nonchalance of those market-people, trafficking there while, three hundred yards away, three human beings were losing their heads; and then my Esingwe . . . I had not gathered that he was to die! It seems, then, that one may be kept months in prison, and then be led out to death! In which case, what of my Panda? How I have delayed and delayed!—he must think himself forgotten. No more delay. . . . When my Esingwe smiled with me, I pressed forward to shake his hand. He showed no pallor; said to me: 'Happiness to you: me go to spear other deer,' on which a woman near to him bit her lip to repress her tears, for the women consider it ignominious to weep for grief or pain. Meantime, the Queen's elect looked askance at me, with, I think, an eye that implied: 'I will not be found unwilling when you are sent to me.' And then I hurried away. . . ."

The next afternoon he presented himself at the Queen's gate in a clean shirt buttoned up, bearing as a present for her Majesty three boxes of matches, a little mirror, and a golden-syrup tin—a little object of which he knew that a billion savages, among them Cæsar and Plato and Shakespear, bending to it all the brain-power of the "sages" and the ages, could not have come near to creating. But he was told that the Queen was in the square, and would be for four afternoons, as usual monthly, in her function as a judge.

He then went down to the square, and, standing somewhat back of the platform, saw her for hours.

"The whole," he says, "is conducted with as much formality as with us. In fact, lawyers, juries, 'judges' law-courts, seem to be an African idea (see Mungo Park); but here the jury, who consist of twenty, all

elderly, and sit on stools before her, only function when she consults them, she otherwise being the sole judge, and wore, I think, an official vestment, a kaross of golden-jackal, soft-flowing, and three golden eagle feathers, *à la* Prince of Wales, beneath a brow-band of gold.

" I witnessed eleven cases that afternoon, civil and criminal, the parties with their barristers standing on the platform between Queen and jury, a knot of law-officers about the throne, while a small crowd stood before the platform.

" No little logic-chopping and fluency of tongue was exhibited in the arguments ; and only in one case did I disagree with the sentence. When they took oath it was by ' the White Lamb Washed,' of whose face I again and again got a good view, and saw her brow always grave with care, or perplexed with doubt.

" All the defendants assumed an amusing air of indifference—ostentatiously yawning, and so on ; but at one she stamped, suddenly crying out : ' You are a fool ! ' upon which he dropped, as if shot ; and another was borne from her unable to repress his sobs, when, after sentencing him, she took and pressed his hand. Two were women, to one of whom the husband of both, now dead, had given a costly kaross all embroidered in blue, and both volubly claimed it. When the discussion had lasted long, the Queen appealed to the jury. The jury disagreed. On which she covered her eyes with her hand, and presently said : ' Me cannot tell which of you is such an artful liar ; but me artful, too : so me take the kaross for myself, you see ' ; on which an official beside her took it from the woman to her left. ' A too facile way out, mother dear ! ' I thought. But that was not the end : her eyes were still covered ; I now understand that she was spying at the women through her fingers ; and she saw that the one on her right pushed her lips far out, as they do when resentful, while the other smiled at the confiscation : and now suddenly the Queen laughed, tossed the kaross to the one on her right, and

said to the smiler : ' You think me not see into you ? You wear " The Elephant " for a month instead.' The crowd stood open-mouthed at it. . . .

" When the next case commenced, I strolled past the platform and down the square, without once bothering to glance backward to see if she saw me."

XIV

IN SUSPENSE

AS soon as the Queen had moved homeward within her troop of damsels from her " White River " bath the next forenoon, Cobby made haste to present himself at the royal gate ; but was told there that " the Great-great " was about to dine, that he should try in the afternoon, and then only after seven days, when the *mopato* rites would be ended.

This fretted and offended Cobby. " These empty, restless days," he wrote ; and : " henceforth I shun the sight of her as she shuns mine—insolent little white nigger."

Yet for three afternoons more we find him standing a witness of court-cases, one afternoon even standing in front of the throne, to see in what mood the Queen would look at him : but she did not seem to see him. Then for some afternoons more he stood witnessing *mopato* functions, of which he says : " Forty boys of fourteen to fifteen stood in a row before the throne, their nudity revealing the weals from the cuts of whips which covered them, these pains and circumcision being the initiation into citizenship : indeed, society here is *organized* on a *mopato*, or sort of Boy Scout, basis, one describing oneself by mentioning one's *mopato*, counting one's age by the number of *mopato* functions which one has witnessed. . . .

" The Queen in another garb of ceremony, a garment of yellow baize painted with black elephants, on her head a helmet from which a pair of horns vaulted off, and in her right hand a javelin having a haft of ivory, seemed in very vivacious vein, and was frequently laughing, having now near her her Sueela in gay attire, also Mandaganya glittering in the sun's light, a crowd round her, and in front of her a considerable

crowd of militia and public, while of each boy in turn she asked : ' What my name is ? ' and when he had rattled off her string of names, she asked : ' What the name of the headman of your *mopato* is ? ' and, that string rattled off, she asked lastly : ' What your name is ? ' on which he rattled off the names which he had invented for himself—' Snake that Bite the Lion,' ' Ichneumon that Eat the Crocodile's Eggs '— swaggering egoisms just in the mood of the scutcheons invented for themselves by our own fantastic Kaffirs who ' came over with the Conqueror,' as ' Cave, Adsum ' (' Look out for yourself, me am about '), ' Dieu et Mon Droit ' (' God and *my* Right '), and so on. It lasted some time, but no one, save me, seemed to have enough of it, she, all fluttered with gaiety, laughing out anon at the names invented.

" After which each boy took up a ball of quartz (mill-stone) that lay at his feet ; the crowd ran asunder ; and she, at the platform's edge, cried aloud : ' Now, *hamba*—go ! ' and clapped hands ; upon which the boys started into racing. Then was agitation ! vociferation ! while the boys, handicapped with the rocks, ran in long files all round the *awna*, perhaps two miles —a cruel trial ; and since they came home in a bunch, none well left, each resolved to win or drop dead, the excitement toward the end became ecstasy, the mob went mad. The winner, a tall fellow, all rib and leg, dropping his rock, darted upon the platform to fling his panting heart into her arms, she with shut lids, grave now, rubbing her face against his, our too motherly mother ; then, patting his face, held to his lips a wine-cup, finally presenting him with spear and shield ; and to the others she announced : ' Well, you are men now ; kill a lion, and quell a wife.' "

Afterwards there was a *mopato* function of young girls, burned and wealed, whose ordeal consisted in bearing burdens of great weight ; then of lads and older girls ; and so on, for four days. Early on the fifth afternoon Cobby, in a spotless shirt, made for the royal gate.

But again to be disappointed : for he met at the gate, entering, a group of State-officials, among them Dzinikulu, who pretended not to see him : and understanding that a council was about to be held, he went back to his park, to wait.

Lying on the ground in a grove, he was glancing at his thermometer at 89°—a heat so rare in the shade up there, that the doves in the banana-bush had rather ceased to roll that râles of their throat, and the canaries, subdued by the heat, had hushed their craze of jubilee till the evening cool—when he was aware of Macray, conducted to him by a sigodhlo-officer : " Hallo, baas ! not laid eyes on you for five days " ; and, throwing himself down in the grove : " Hot to-day—offer us some tyvala."

As his face was already flushed, Cobby answered : " I understand that you drink quite a lot of tyvala ! In a climate like this you will acquire cirosis."

" What the devil's that ?—sounds like a liqueur. Leave me to my fate, inkoos—give a guest to drink," he dropped at his length upon his back : " this ain't bad here—for a time ; on such a day, when the marrow of one's back runs like butter, a young man's fancy heavily turns to thoughts of love, to say nothing of a young woman's, Mr. Tennyson—*Souvent la chaleur d'un beau jour fait fillette rêver à l'amour. . . .*"

Cobby's eyebrows lifted. " You speak French, Macray . . . ? "

" You may bet, baas—been all over the place. But funny existence this of yours and mine here ! What's the idea ? What are we waiting for ? I expected that by now the ravens of the valley would have picked out your eyes ; but not a bit of it : we eat the lotus of ease, we live like lords at a lady's expense —what's her game ? Are you being fattened to be eaten—or what ? Had an interview yet ? "

Cobby answered : " *I* am waiting to see Panda free, and then at once I set about returning to civilization."

" Right you are ! We two—and Sueela."

" *Who ?* You jest."

"No, really, we take old Sue with us—Sue I call her, Susie-Susie. Seriously, baas, I seem to be gone on that nigger. Me can't think of nothing else but you, Sue-Sue! And I see my way to abduct her all right. This is the very night of the plighting of our vows: we little two meet outside the town about eleven o'clock, and——"

"What right ——? Better be careful! You break the law of the land," Cobby said with a warning eye.

"Law of the land don't trouble Douglas of that ilk, inkoos. And no one's going to know, you know—Sueela's too deep and fleet a Venus for that. I met her night-before-last in her mother's grounds, and——" he related the story of the arranging of the rendezvous, Cobby listening with a shade of displeasure on his face; and presently Macray, reverting ever to the subject of his success in love, became irksome, Cobby now wishing him away, that he himself might return to seek the Queen's face. Finally, he bid Macray come some other day, and, on finding himself free, at once set off, once more to try his luck at an interview, the sun still high among clouds like pools of silver shuddering cooler in the middle, like suns with sun-spots shuddering cooler—clouds moving southward before a breeze that blew the troops of trees into choruses of commotion, cooling the afternoon with a wafture as of fans, and, far astray in a heaven vaster than the heaven of Europe, a moon that looked a cloud of the heaven of heavens.

After passing out of his gate, and southward down an avenue to the back of the Queen's park, he was met by sounds of music, of singing, of outcries of girl-laughter, and he paused, again disappointed, for he thought that he recognized her voice.

On creeping near to listen, he saw a little orifice in the woof of reeds that filled the interspaces between the poles of the enclosure, and, lying on his face, he applied his eye to it, to spy if she was there.

He saw a glade in a thicket "rankly sylvan," he writes, "with frond and fern, palmyra and wild date,

wild coffee and orange, banana, castor-oil, all involved in whorls of convolvulus, of wild vine and the flamboyant blooms of numerous climbers, she on her face in grass, not far from a frog-pond covered over with areas of lotus and arum, and before her, alone with her, a bacchant dancing—Sueela; and Selim, the Queen's steed, with them, to which now and again she gave a nut.

"I was spying at them some time. Until I was driven, or rather *washed*, away, I could not get myself to go.

"Sueela wore a moocha of cotton cloth, close-clinging like the Egyptian kilt, without any mantle, while the Queen wore a mantle of cotton without any moocha, her calves swinging upright as she lay, and here evidently was *negligé* and sweet-do-nothing—that day, indeed, being their monthly Sunday and nominal holiday, if all their days are not holidays. I think, though, that that might be a public good, if they dressed with a little greater elaboration—though I, on my side, had no right to be spying upon their privacy. Happily, the royal-motherly feet were clean and soft, and she obviously pays some attention to her toe-nails. The whole being of her is a thing good to eat with one's teeth, fruit good for food, by heaven, and there I lay with her on the ground, near, near, yet hungry. She was smoking that long pipe of theirs, then from a bowl full of blue fruit (*mawa*) took one languidly to bruise it with her front teeth, then was gnawing nuts with wanton molars, half alaugh, casting the husks at an ibis, that anon by the pond cried out '*Wal-wal-wal*' at her, while swallows swung down about her, magnetized like moths by her light and fire, and a lark, black and saffron, carolled above, and the green dove greeted her, in love with her and with lullaby, and it seemed to be in the greed of their heat for her that the monkeys rushed about the bush.

"Meantime, Sueela danced to song after song, some of which I recognized as songs hummed about the town—the up-to-date creations of the community,

as in Europe they sing the latest things from the music-halls : and very characteristic, ethnographically, most of them are—the so-called ' python-song,' for example, which Sueela twice sang :

Touch me ?
Touch me ?
If me let you touch me,
You'll always be wanting to touch me.
Taste me ?
Taste me ?
If me let you taste me,
You'll often be wanting to taste me.
See me ?
See me ?
If me let you see me,
You'll run ! and then you'll run back.
Smell me ?
Smell me ?
If me let you smell me,
You'll run and you'll never come back.

" Then outcries of laughter ! (The python is highly prized as a dish, here as elsewhere, but its taste, as in the case of the bloater, excels its odour : and always after the list of its effects on the senses, the same outcries of laughter.) Sueela's instrument was attached to her body, a species of *merimba* (two parallel rods, connected by laths across, under the laths being calabashes to act as sound-boards), she thrumming the laths with drumsticks with a fluency of Paderewski, and certainly she dances like a grace this girl, though with a certain aggressiveness and fierceness of heat not native to the Graces. In figure she is the female of her brother, the executioner, as perfectly turned out, though taller (for a girl)—a being essentially special and herself—excellent in some way or other, thoroughbred—big-headed, big-faced, big-eyed, everything rounded and smoothed to beauty as in good sculpture, her head all horned, a broad parting disparting it at the back to the nape, and nothing can portray the raillery and roguery of her ogling, her sauciness and scorn, her feminine message.

Magdalen is the name of her! or will be when she comes to repent of the sun and of her youth. Yet, I was pleased to see, all her motions were modest, save for some moments when her sovereign danced with her, they holding each other, Zulu-fashion, round the haunch, and then their bodies, challenging each other, jostled and jazzed a little, to the popular

> Oh, rain, don't keep him back,
> Oh, wind, don't keep him long,
> Oh, rain, don't keep him back,
> For me feel like a breezy tree.
> Me *feel*, me *feel*, me *feel*,
> Me feel like a breezy tree,
> Me *feel*, me *feel*, me *feel*,
> Me feel like a breezy tree,

they, in their feelings, moving their shoulders sensitively, as when a flea is on the nerve of one's back, and one works the shoulders uneasily. After which Sueela 'cut rattang,' as they say—though exactly what 'rattang' means I have been unable to discover: she jumps, coming down bent to the right, the right foot projected, with a lovely long concave from right toe to breast, left toes on the ground behind, wrists at ribs; then she jumps, coming down bent to the left, left foot projected, and so on, each jump very brisk and strict, definitely commenced, definitely ended, and at each jump she clucks the tongue. And now the song was:

> Me wish my finger was a gun,
> Me'd shoot Mpanga as she run. . . .

"I could not but reflect," Cobby adds in his somewhat heavy way sometimes, "upon the heartlessness of this utterance: for I happen to know this Mpanga, a poor cripple who goes selling *nju* beans and oil of cucumber-seeds for salads, who with every step of her right foot stoops sharp to the right. She never 'run,' poor girl, and if *my* finger was a gun, I'd cut it off, sooner than do her hurt. But such are the Wa-

Ngwanya—a certain callousness of heart. I call them 'the black French'—intelligent, gay, gallant, *bon ami*, but hard *au fond*, lacking in compunction.

"The Queen, having danced a little, sat again; but presently rose again, now taking up a bowl, and, in moving toward the pond, muttered something close at Sueela's ear; then at the pond filled the bowl. When I saw her lift it to her lips, I wondered that she should drink such water: I now know that the gesture was a pretence: for, pretending to drink, she stepped backward toward my chink, and, suddenly spinning, slung the water at my eye. Then fits of giggling!

"The chink was so little, that it must have required no little quickness of eye to descry the shine of mine; but, as I could not imagine that the *colour* had been detected, I was hardly offended, though much abashed. I ran a little away; then, making my way round to the gate, sent in a request for an interview.

"Quite fifteen minutes I had to wait in a very trying suspense; then came the answer: Not to-day, but to-morrow, I might see the Queen. . . .

"I felt a species of relief at the delay!—strange. I crave and shrink; and no more know myself."

XV

DZINIKULU MOVES

GOBBY continues: "I then went back to my hut till the evening, when I set out for the funeral-wake of the sister of my friend Seshiké, the blacksmith, to whom, in wandering about town one day, I showed how to upset iron; for, though they have considerable skill in forging, they could not, till now, bend a rod in a sharp angle, not knowing upsetting. Now the tidings of it has flown like fire, even reaching to the Queen's ear, I hear, and Seshiké, Rambya, and their fellow-smiths have overwhelmed me with presents.

"It is remarkable how their culture advances to a given point, and then abruptly falls short. The average Mo-Ngwanya is 'better educated,' as Spencer would say, than a Lord Chief Justice or a Chinese 'scholar,' has more (*re* al) knowledge—knowledge of *things*, as distinct from opinions—of geology, of the phenomena of soils, and crops, and stock, and metals: yet they could not upset iron! cannot make a screw-thread! cannot make sugar! Neither can a Chief Justice; but he soon would, if he was as educated as they; and many men can. Their sugar-canes they just suck; but have abundance of honey, which they hive in hollowed blocks within the woods, where one is pestered by the persistence of honey-guide birds wooing one to follow them to the hives.

"I made my way in moonlight down the awna, now solitary, and across the second bridge toward the East End, three different dogs fleeing from my ghost-face with growls—still: not flattering. Dogs, women, children: a woman may brave me till I am close, then, if alone, may suddenly take fright, thinking, 'Oh, no, I'm off,' and is gone flying, while the children,

on seeing me, stand paralyzed, bawling out, or flee with screams.

" Eshowe being a garden-city, I found crowds of them spending the evening in front of their grounds, shouting banter, laughter, gossip across long distances at one another, and, as throngs of brats were everywhere, and dancings going on to drums and hand-clapping, there was no lack of clatter and action : and still after eleven when I moved homeward the dancings were going on in the moonlight. I saw two women quarrelling, who confronted each other in formal conflict, leaning far forward, with their palms planted on their haunches, and rapid as the hoofs of a troop of horses pattering their tongues acted together, like a pair of pennants waving away together in a gale. I still feel amid them the species of surprise which, on visiting France in my teens, I experienced at hearing everybody reeling-off French, and being as old and at home in their world as my mother in hers.

" At Seshiké's, too, there was clatter and dance enough, complicated here with some drunkenness and a mood of moral laxity, to the accompaniment of that beat, beat, of the drum's monotony, which, day or night, will not cease till the body is buried—this to scare away her ' spirit,' which is considered to be envious of, and unfriendly to, the living : and here it is that advanced Europeans are perhaps most in advance of the savage, *he*, like the ancients and our Puritan parents, living in apprehension of the cosmos —a very genuine jumpiness, and no fun—while we others have attained to serenity in the face of sun and thunder, death and hell and volcano—or, when we fear, it is another *species* of fear. Later we may be free of fear, and only love. But this sound of drums is of the essence of this town—everywhere, at every hour, one hears it going on somewhere, dumbly remote or booming near, like the beat of the bosom of the community.

" On arriving at Seshiké's, I found, to my surprise, Sueela there, ' scattering roses with the throng ' ;

but very soon after I came she ceased to share in the revel, and became subdued ; Seshiké, meantime, who was tipsy, celebrating my coming with endless fuss and gesture, I having to pretend to drink mead, and to touch the left shoulder of the dead, who lay within the hut with a ring of ashes on her brow, drink at her hand, an oval of candles about her, and three women who clapped their palms, and now and again gave vent to ululations, with their hands clasped on their heads.

" Then I sat on a stool before the hut, on the other side of the door being Sueela seated ; beside the hut beat the drum ; and before it two flutes tooting to perhaps thirty persons lewdly dancing and making merry.

" What made me stay was an inquisitiveness to see whether Sueela left ' about eleven,' the hour, as Macray had alleged, of her rendezvous with him.

" She, meantime, every few minutes was approached by Seshiké and others with flourishes of courtesy, was reproached for being sad, and was pressed to partake of palm-toddy, of ground-nuts fried in cream, of masuka fruit in honey. She would not, however ; and every time I glanced at her I caught the corner of her eye on me ; so at last I said to her : " You are Sueela. I take it that you know me."

" Her answer was : ' Me not see you close before. You something like Spiciewegiehotiu ! '

" With her eyebrows on high, the girl's eyes widely ogle, and she spreads her unanimous ten fingers like duck's toes, with a certain shrinking of awe, mock-babyish, as who should say : ' Oh-h-h my ! ' But her extraordinary eyes have many expressions.

" ' *I* like the Queen ? ' said I. ' Really ? Not so pretty ! '

" ' Oh, well,' says she, ' men are ugly things.'

" ' Don't like them ? Not at all ? '

" She cut an eye of disdain, shrugging, and then she shrugged again, and shrugged again, seized in a disease of shrugging.

" I then asked her why she was there, to which she answered that the dead was her cousin ; and I asked her why she was quiet, to which she answered : ' Me not know. Girls such *silly* things.'

" ' In what sense, though ? ' I asked her.

" ' They not know their own mind,' she informed me. ' They want, and they not want. Then they want something else. They toss in their sleep, they scratch themselves. The tsetse-fly sting them '—a piece of natural history so *indefinite*, that I fled from my mental indeterminateness to the irrelevant question : ' What are there tsetse in Wo-Ngwanya ? ' to which she answered yes, at one spot in ' The North.'

" I next said to her : ' Well, you had better come home now with me '—for I wished to shield her from any mischief into which she might put her foot with that absurd Macray ; but she glanced sharply at me, asking : ' Why " better " ? ' and I understood that my phrase had scared her into a suspicion that Macray may have revealed to me something of her intrigue, so, in honour, I merely answered that it seemed late for a young girl to be alone so far from home. But her stillness and the reverie of her lowered lids showed that she was still suspicious.

" When I presently asked her if we should set out, she looked down, evidently meditating, at her beautiful fingers, like the fingers of the Venus dei Medici, but bigger ; but then answered : ' Me have to go first to my mother's '—and this I understood to be an untruth.

" She then asked me : ' You see Spiciewegiehotiu to-morrow, no ? ' and, on my answering ' yes,' she asked : ' You done wanting to carry her off ? '

" ' Not done wanting,' I replied, ' but done attempting, I think.'

" ' Yes,' she said, ' then we all be friends.'

" ' We, who ? '

" ' You and me,' she said in a low tone—I don't know why she said it so low !

" ' That will be charming,' I answered, rather too low, perhaps.

"I then saw her glance at the moon, and soon afterwards, suddenly rising, she said: 'We meet again: me must go see . . .' and was gone behind the hut. 'See' what, Sueela? You did not say. . . .

"I peered round the other side of the hut, and spied her feet fleeing through the back grounds, saw her pause to pry about, reconnoitring for spies, then saw her dart off with balancing palms across a narrow board over a brook that flows through the bush, and vanish in bush.

"But some moments afterwards I saw a shadow dash over the grass, gathered that she was being tracked, and ran to catch and warn her. But when I came to the stockade of the grounds, she had already scaled it, for, looking over, I saw her running along an alley toward Mustapha, her stallion, which was being held by a lad, and neighed as she came.

"Even as she reached him the horse was off, she vaulting upon him as lightly as a girl steps upon her bicycle and glides away; and, as I heard his gallop die away into silence, I saw a young man, all but naked, scale the stockade twenty yards from me, and pelt away after her."

XVI

THE RENDEZVOUS

DZINIKULU was standing under the shadow of a motsuri, a gloomy tree like cypress, in a field of dourrha at the north-east corner of that water which lies under "The Elephant," and he was eyeing a stretch of sugar-cane eighty yards north of him, when up there started to him out of the dourrha a snake panting with news: "She just gone into the canes. Sir Caray waited for her by the bamboo. She tie Mustapha to it. They in the canes."

This was hardly said when another herald started up to pant the same news; and soon afterwards another.

Dzinikulu said to them: "Run back now. Watch all round the canes till she come out: then wait till she and Sir Caray separate, then tell her me waiting here to see her, and she better come."

They ran variously away; and after waiting half an hour, Dzinikulu at last grunted: "Eheh, she come."

Pelting Sueela came, paled, conscious of being all too late; scare and dismay in her!

"See me here, Dzinikulu," says she standoffishly, panting, with expanded nostrils: "me can't stop—me very late—Spiciewegiehotiu——"

"Sueela, you love too much," Dzinikulu remarked.

"Who? Me? Oh, my mother, you got it wrong! Me meet Sir Caray to talk some politics—Spiciewegiehotiu tell me go—my mother tell me go. After the politics Sir Caray say 'Kiss me'; me say, 'No, your top teeth come out.' Me not like him; me—hate him."

She visibly shuddered, and Dzinikulu said: "Maybe you hate him now, but you like him well enough just now, Sueela, when you follow him into the canes. No

good saying no—six eyes see you. Suppose me tell Spiciewegiehotiu ? "

This struck her silent. His leer of guile, dwelling on her, could see her eyes dilated, her fingers stretched, her tall-looking form looking stretched in apprehension ; till, lowering her lids, she just muttered : " You think me care ? "

Now he gripped her shoulder, speaking close and pressingly : " No need to be frightened : nobody going to know. You and me friends from now—you in my power, me in yours—me to make you my head-wife when me sit on my father's throne—you to help me and Sir Cobby carry off Spiciewegiehotiu."

At which a fire of wrath and scorn shot from her eyes, but in so lightning a flash, that he did not see it ; in the next moment she was smiling a tiny smile of guile, with downcast eyes, asking : " When Sir Cobby carry her off ? "

" Me not know yet—me have plans—and me not fail, if you with us. So what you say ? Me make your mother Chief Councillor—me make you Queen—hug you every day—make much of you."

" You getting o-o-old ! " she answered, ogling, with stretched fingers, in her shrinking way.

" Nonsense, not getting old : young man ; wait and see."

" How me know you make me Queen ? "

He touched the ground with his palms, saying, " Me swear by ' The Elephant.' "

" Swear you not let anybody know about me and Caray."

" Me swear that, too."

" By ' The Elephant.' "

" You swear first you not tell Spiciewegiehotiu what pass between you and me."

" Me swear," she said.

" By The White Lamb Washed."

She had one moment's hesitation ; then, touching the ground, swore.

" Now," said she, " you swear about me and Caray."

On which he, touching the ground, swore by "The Elephant," and did not see the slyness of her smile—sly in her knowledge that *his* intellect was much more servile to sanctities and oaths than was *hers*; that he, afraid to break, would keep, and she, afraid to break, would break.

"So we friends now," he said: "you with me and Sir Cobby: you say yes."

"You think me can decide so soon?" she asked. "To-morrow night, if me send you a basket of mawas, me say yes; if me not send, me say no. Now let me go—Oh, my mother, me late, late, this night. . . ."

They waved arms, as away she went darting through the dourrha, and presently to him, and to Macray, moving homeward, rang from afar the clatter of her stallion's tramp.

At full bat she galloped all up the awna, and, as she sprang from her horse, tossed her rein at a groom, immediately to start into running up the avenue toward the Queen's hut.

But the closer she approached it, the slower she moved—saw the opening closed; and only after several minutes of hesitation did she timidly rap.

There was no answer; and there now she stood in misery, suspended, wringing her palms, heaving the appeal of her eyes to the skies, breathing: "Oh, my mother, what a fool, what a fool. live in me!" All was still but that beating in her bosom, and the breeze's innumerable footstep trooping through the trees; and presently, still more timorously, she rapped afresh. But no answer: and after waiting through minute added to minute on the sharp edge and tiptoe of suspense, now she clasps her head distractedly, staring, saying: "My mother! this is Caray this night! no more Caray! me done, done, done with boys and men!" And now, crouching, her mouth at the round of door, she calls: "Oh, let me in, dear! Me love you."

No response followed at once, but some minutes afterwards there was movement within, the bar of the

door was removed, the Queen appeared, stooped outward to look at the moon's position, and went back to sit on her bed, while Sueela, entering, stood near the doorway.

Nothing was said—Spiciewegiehotiu seated with her finger-joints at her cheek, looking judicial. But after some time she quietly asked : " Where you been ? "

" You know me been to my cousin's wake."

" You straight from there now ? "

" No. Me meet Prince Dzinikulu. He and me talk together. Me have things to tell you."

" You seen Caray to-night ? "

" Me ? No."

" Not laid eyes on him ? "

" Caray ? No."

" Swear."

" My goodness ! me—swear."

Spiciewegiehotiu sprang sharply up, caught up a nut-candle, and went to hold it close to the culprit's face.

" What scratch your face like that ? One, two, three—You been in the canes, girl ? "

" Oh, my mother, which canes ? Me ? Oh, don't think such things of me, dear." Sueela's voice of reproach broke, she covered her face, shed a tear.

" Well, then, tell me—*what* scratch your face ? "

" Maybe it was that long-grass in Seshiké's grounds. Me was sitting in the grass——"

" Lie. If you lie to me, me kill you ! " Up went her palm to slap, while the culprit buried away her face, presenting the elbow to whatever might come.

" Now the truth ! "

" Haven't me told you ? Think as you like now. You only jealous, my girl."

" What me have to be jealous for ? You been with a man ? "

" Yes, that's it—think so, if you like ! "

" They say you bad ! They say you're a strumpet ! Are you ? Tell me ! " She stamped.

" Yes, me bad, me black—anything you like, my girl ! "

" Trollop ! They say Spiciewegiehotiu's friendship not enough for you ! They say you want man ! Is that what you are ? Answer ! "

Sueela laughed out from under her elbow. " You only jealous ! But that is foolishness. You think you love me more than me love you, Spiciewegiehotiu ? You think so ? Maybe me show you some day "—words which Spiciewegiehotiu afterwards recalled, and ever remembered.

She turned away, and presently in a changed voice asked : " You not even seen Caray ? "

" Me tell you no," sullenly the other muttered.

Spiciewegiehotiu drew her forefinger across her throat, saying : " Good thing for Caray. Me cut his head short off, if he touch you."

Some moments more, and she said appealingly to Sueela : " You sure, dear ? "

The other muttered something, and Spiciewegiehotiu now said : " People believe what they want to believe ; maybe that's why me believe you : but that not make it true. Next time me see you and Caray together, me know with one glance what's what between you and him. If you not see him, what make you so late—long after midnight ? "

" Me tell you me meet Prince Dzinikulu ! "

Pause.

" Come on, kiss me."

And, ogling, with outspread fingers, Sueela stepped stately ; and cheek rubbed cheek.

" Who my friend ? " asked Spiciewegiehotiu, asmile.

" You tell me first who love you ? "

" You love me. Now you tell me who my friend."

" You know." And cheek rubbed cheek.

Then Sueela dropped upon her rugs, and sighed, while the Queen paced silent, wrapped in herself, with rather pressing steps.

" Me see Sir Cobby at Seshiké's," Sueela remarked presently, undoing her moocha.

Spiciewegiehotiu halted one instant, then, without saying anything, continued to pace.

And presently again Sueela : " What you thinking of now ? You not curious to hear about me and Dzinikulu ? "

" Tell me," the Queen muttered, pacing still.

" Dzinikulu in with Cobby. Me say to Cobby at Seshiké's, ' you done trying to carry off the Queen ? ' Cobby answer ' yes.' But that not true : for Dzinikulu offer to-night to make me his queen, if me help him and Cobby——"

Now Spiciewegiehotiu halted. And at once her intellect seized, not upon what, to Sueela, was the main point—Dzinikulu's treason—but upon a by-point very embarrassing for Sueela. " And how come Dzinikulu to believe that you would not tell me this ? "

" He make me swaaare not to tell : so he think me not tell ! "

" How he *make* you ? "

" My mother ! it was in a dark alley—he and three men—they drag me off Mustapha—and Dzinikulu say, if me not swear, they hatch up a tale that they catch me with a boy. So me swooore ! "

" What you swear by ? "

" By—' The Elephant.' "

The royal toe tapped the ground. " You lying. You think me not know when you *lying ?* " Then with tenderness : " Oh, why you lie to me, dear ? "

On which Sueela, leaning forward, her face beaming affection, cried out in a distress of conscience : " Me love you ! "

" You think me not know that ? But you lying somewhere. Me think you meet Caray, Dzinikulu see you, and so could make you swear ; nor he wouldn't make you swear by ' The Elephant,' he make you swear by The White Lamb Washed : and now you break an oath that you swore by me."

" My mother ! " breathed Sueela, staring at her.

" Tell me now if that was it," said the Queen.

Sueela covered her face, shaking her head, crying out in distress : " Me tell you no ! Me not see any Caray this night ! Me wish Caray was dead ! "

At which the Queen smiled, saying : " Never mind ; maybe he die. As for Dzinikulu "—she paced again —" he tired of life, that man, he want to die : he must wait till me see my way to give him what he want. But me think he lie about Cobby : if Cobby tell you he done trying, he done. Me know Cobby."

Sueela looked at her with a perplexed speculation ! " How you know Cobby ? You only speak six words with him one night ! "

No answer was made ; the Queen paced afresh, wrapped in her cogitations. And presently Sueela : " When you going to marry Sandelikatze ? "

" Never."

" Me thought not. So what changed you so sudden ?"

Spiciewegiehotiu laughed to herself. " That was foolishness ! Oh, that *was !* Me only said it to please you and Mandaganya. Everybody laugh ! You think the people stand such a thing ? "

" You not care about that when you want anything!"

" Yes, me care. And me not want this."

" So when you going to get married and know what a man is ? "

" In six months."

" Who you going to marry ? "

" A king."

" Which king ? "

" Some king "—she shrugged.

" You not tell me everything you think about in your head ! "

" What you mean ? "

" Nothing."

Spiciewegiehotiu paced on.

And presently again Sueela : " Cobby something like you."

" Like *me ?* "

" Eheh. Me see him close to-night. He very pretty."

" You think so ? "

" Eheh. You not think so ? "

" He know a lot of things : me know that."

"But nobody understand why you not kill Cobby! why you let him free, and have him here in the sigodhlo!"

"Oh, you too foolish. You not see all those things in Cobby's waggons? Me could not even guess what they good for. Cobby will tell me."

"How you know he tell you?"

"Me know. Some of them useful, maybe, like guns. It appears that white man know a lot. Already Cobby teach the blacksmiths how to make a rod thicker in the middle than at the ends. Cobby do us good—help in war. Me going to fight."

"Oh, my mother. Who you going to fight with now?"

"Me not sure yet. Maybe with Sebingwe, but me think with Daisy. Me pick a quarrel with Daisy."

"Poor Daisy. When?"

"Soon. This month."

"But what you want more war for already? . . . Me think me know, though."

"What me want it for?"

"Me think me knooow!"

"Foolish thing. War good. Only, so many wives to one man!—that what spoil it. Listen: me tell you now something me been thinking. Suppose me make a law—one man, one wife, no more. Then suppose me make war: three thousand boys fall in battle. So now three thousand girls will get no boy. But *which* three thousand? If a boy can only have one wife, he going to choose the prettiest, strongest, cleverest girl his *lobola* can buy. So three thousand of the least strong and clever girls will go childless. Then the average of the next generation will be so much stronger and cleverer: and in fifty years, with one wife, and a lot of war, the Wa-Ngwanya will become a nation of kings and queens."

Sueela meditated on it. "Me see," she said: "your *eylosah* (attendant spirit) always speaking things in your ear. But you think the people stand that law? My mother! one wife? And who to hoe

the man's fields, and weave his mantles ? A man not like to pat every night on the same old pair of paps ! "

" How *you* know what man like ? Let the man hoe his own fields !—why not ? Wo-Ngwanya man too lazy. You wait : me going to do it—when me see my way. If they say no, me say yes."

" Isn't that what me said just now ? When you want anything, you not care what they say."

" Yes, me care, if me not strong enough ; if me strong enough, me not care."

" And what going to make you strong enough ? "

Spiciewegiehotiu tossed out her arm. " Victory ! Victory on top of victory. The conqueror can do what he like."

" Poor Daisy ! " went Sueela, ogling with spread fingers, " and poor Sandelikatze ! Then when you feel yourself strong enough to force the people to stand a white king, you make somebody king ! And everybody to have only one wife, because *he* to have only one."

" Oh, you fool," muttered Spiciewegiehotiu, standing still, with an underlook.

" You think me not see into you ? You say that they say me want man : you want man, too ; and you going to kill thousands of men to get one man."

Spiciewegiehotiu stood a minute looking at her, then on a sudden remarked : " Look here, me not answer you, you too foolish " ; and paced anew.

And presently Sueela yawned vast, complaining : " Me sleepy ! "

" Yes, poor thing," said Spiciewegiehotiu, " go to sleep, you done up, Caray wear you out."

" Eheh, white man rough," answered Sueela, stretching—" think as you like, my girl ! "

In another minute she was felled and slept, the Queen still pacing until the lights went out, the moon went out, then, lying, put out her hand, drew and took her companion's, and so slept, and dreamt.

XVII

IN THE BAOBAB

THE following afternoon Cobby presented himself at the royal entrance, nicely belted and combed, bringing a little looking-glass and a half-pound packet of sugar, to gain the good graces of the sovereign.

He was at once admitted, after depositing knife and revolver, according to etiquette, passed up the avenue, and, though his hands were clammy, to convince himself that he was not fluttered, paused to note that the avenue-statues were Egyptian in type; then on to the royal hut; but now heard to his right a voice that called out: "Me here."

On each side of the hut-door stood a baobab, and in the hollow of the one to the right, large as a hall in which forty people may sleep, he found the Queen seated, all among cushions and leopard-skins, in yellow, blackened with elephants, and in the black of her hair yellow flowers of *ngotuane*, a parrot on her lap, a stool before her.

Profoundly Cobby bowed, while she, cocking up an eye sideward at him, asked: "What you want?"

"First," answered Cobby formally, "to thank you for the favours I have of your hand; secondly, to present to you as a petty return, these little things; thirdly, to intercede with you for my man, Panda, still interned in 'The Elephant'; and lastly to announce the early departure of me and my men from your hospitable and charming country."

He then presented the things, and she regarded herself in the glass, meditating very gravely upon what she beheld there. "Eheh, this good," she muttered. And she asked him: "This made of tin—or of silver?"

"Of neither," he answered: "*quicksilver* is the English for it—a liquid metal. This is spread on *glass*, which is made by melting sand in the presence of soda and lime, and permits light to pass through it."

"Permits light," she repeated musingly. . . . "Yes, but what light *is?* You can't see it, you can't touch it"—a question at which Cobby stood surprised, highly admiring the mind that so enquired.

"No," he answered—"can't see it: light is a force, and force is invisible. You must understand that the space between the sun and us is not empty, but is filled with a substance, which the force of the sun sets all atremble in waves or rays, like a pool when a stone is thrown in. Some of which rays are light-rays: and these, striking on the myriad bits of your face, fly off to the *glass*, fly through to the shiny metal behind, and fly off that through the glass again to strike into your eye: then you see as one whole the myriad bits of that face of yours."

He smiled, but grave, grave, was she, her finger-joints at her cheek, the image of meditation. Silence. Then she asked: "And what that round thing is that you sent me?" on which he explained what a clock is, making her still graver. Then suddenly she looked down at the packet of sugar, asking: "What this is?"

"Taste it," said he.

She put some on her tongue.

"Eheh," she muttered with a nod: "it good."

"That in English is called *shoo-gah*: not so nice as honey, but preferable, because it can be procured in far greater quantity—from cane."

"Cane? How from cane?"

"The cane-juice is crushed out by a machine, then is boiled in large basins of copper; when it cools it is *shoo-gah*."

"Machine? How you get the machine?"

"Oh, that is easily made." And, imprudently, he added: "If I was going to stay longer, I should show your people how to make the machine, and how to cast the basins."

All meditation was she, and suddenly, after a silence, she muttered : " Sit down."

On which he sat on the stool, drawing it aside, for the light in there was subdued, the doorway into the tree-trunk not being wide. And now a kodak in his hand clicked.

" What *that* is ? " she asked.

" A thing that makes a picture of anything in the twinkling of an eye—or any number of pictures. The picture which it has just made of you I will send you to-morrow."

Her quick eyes reflected. " A picture like this ? "—pressing open a locket hung about her neck, she held it toward him, adding : " A picture of my father."

But Cobby said with surprise : " There is no picture!"

And now she glanced at the locket—the photograph was gone.

Her astonishment gave place to a paleness—of anger.

After a little she muttered : " Caray steal it ! "

" Macray ? No, there you are wrong, I assure you," Cobby said : " such pictures are quite common and cheap among white men : Macray would never dream of stealing one."

" Caray steal it," she repeated, speaking rather to herself. " Me show it to him one night—he ask me to. Since then me not open the locket. He steal it. Maybe he tired of life. Or—why he steal it ? "

Cobby, apprehensive now for Macray's safety, earnestly answered : " Oh, take my word, he never did ! "

" Maybe me know Caray better than you know him." She smiled a little, scratching the parrot's head. " Tell me now about why you come, and why you bring Caray."

He leaned keenly to tell her. " It was for your own sake that I came to take you away, because in Europe you would be a far greater queen than here—with fewer subjects indeed, but far more skilled, and slaving for your pleasures far harder than any Mo-Ngwanya ever thinks of labouring for his own pleasures ; indeed

someone who is enjoying the wealth which is yours by law is at this moment a more powerful sort of monarch in Europe than you are here, or than monarchs are there; and I, being your cousin, and your natural guardian——"

In a grave, low voice she mentioned: "Me your guardian, Cobby, not you mine"; at which Cobby flushed, and shut up.

"How you come to be my cousin?" she demanded.

"Son of your mother's sister. We two have the same blood and heart-beat. Does something in you not know it?"

To this she made no answer, nor looked at the light in his eyes: but presently asked: "What the name of that someone is who enjoy this wealth which is mine by law?"

"He, too, is your cousin: his name is Douglas Macray."

Now she started. "Same name as Caray?"

"Yes—just a chance. *Your* name, too, is Macray: Flora Macray: 'Flora' meaning goddess of flowers—queen of all the roses and lilies—queen of girls and of queens. . . ."

He had her ear, but not her eyes, which were turned aside from him. She presently asked: "You know this cousin of mine?"

"I never chanced to meet him—no."

"What Caray's other names?" she next asked.

"Just Douglas Macray, I think."

"Short . . .! And what the names of the other Douglas Macray?"

"Just Douglas Macray, I fancy. We *have* short names in Europe, except among some aristocrat families, whose children have strings of names like Africans, their whole tone being rather African."

"Me think me see something," she muttered. "And what make you bring Caray with you?"

"I wanted a white man, and he offered himself."

"So. Me see. That why he steal my father's picture. But how you know me was here in Wo-Ngwanya?"

"Do you remember a man named Rolls? He told me of you, and come with me nearly to Wo-Ngwanya; but, sent with Macray in advance over the mountains, Rolls was killed by a lion."

"Caray kill him," she muttered at once to herself.

She then asked: "And it very far that country you come from?" and when he answered: "Thousands on thousands of miles," musingly she said: "The world broad—na! and so many sorts of men and of beasts it breed and feed. Under the sunrise men and women busy living, and under the sunset. Some not eat python-meat, some not circumcised, some file their teeth away, some knock out their top teeth to be like oxen, some drop upon their back and waggle their legs together to say 'how-d'you-do.' Babisa traders come to me every year from Mozambique, Arabs from Zanzibar, and Pombeiros from where the sea beat that beach which is nearest to the sun's going down: there Portuguese spend their days. They all different, and think different thoughts. Some bring calico, some cowrie-shells, horses, guns, seeds; we give them indigo, ivory of elephant and hippopotamus tusks, oil, dust of dalama (gold), which women wash from river-sands, with agates and garnets out of gneiss-rock. Me want more trade—far more: that will be part of *your* work, to make us large like the world, liberal and rich like the world. The world so rich, so strange! If a brook flow, it flow with music; if a breeze blow, it feel sweet, it blow with music; if the moon droop down, it droop in beauty. One evening me hear a little stream whisper so sweet, something seem to say to me: 'Me-and-you: can the seven North-stars alter their form? maybe they alter some day: but you in me for ever.' But all not good: corpses smell bad; old lions get toothache; old men get wrinkles. They say love tweaking sweet: but, if the girl get a child, it hurt her, unless she under fourteen. She not do any harm, perhaps; yet she rue, pangs trap her. Then she have joy again: the child smell good; she love it. But now and again it

smell bad : she not love it for a minute ; then it smell good again, she pardon and love it again, she gallop it between her palms, she laugh. So the world is. On the whole, it good."

"Oh, yes," said Cobby : "that is proved by the continued existence of the human race : for anon it is, on the whole, bad for an individual, and then the individual at once kills himself. Whether it ever is, on the whole, bad for any lower animal I don't know ; if ever it is, and the animal has no means of escape by suicide, then a deep wrong is in the world."

"Yes," she answered "but it not argue with anybody—dumb ! no tongue but the wind dumb, the sea mumbling, the thunder bumping. If you bless it, it answer, it babble 'yes, me-and-you,' but, if you blame it, it not care what you say, it go on rolling in its glories. When it want to rain, it rain : if you say 'damn the rain,' it wet you the same, no less, no more ; when it not want it not rain, the rain-makers cannot make it. What kind of thing it all is ? What kind of thing make it ? White man know ?" She peered suddenly into his face.

"No, of course," Cobby answered : "only what you, and jackals, and archangels know—that there is Eternal Power, which shows some of its workings to our senses. To Power we English give the names 'Energy,' 'God,' 'Force' ; but these are mere names for convenience ; what kind of being Force or Power is no life can ever divine : for when by God's help we wink, or plough, or pick a flower, using Power, we have no notion *how* we do it—it is boundlessly too profound for us, in trillions of eras no living thing can ever come near to dreaming, for God is past finding out. We know something *about* Power, however—know that it is *very* powerful : it may be powerful without end ; and we know that it is most adorable—our gaze can hardly bear the glory of the hem of the garments of the sun. Moreover, white men now have reason to believe that in time Power will be wholly good. You must understand that the

bad smell of corpses, wrinkles, and so on, is very likely just a temporary state of things : for the high types of life, like lions and men, have not been long on the earth—*men* but for the twinkling of an eye, so to say—and are not yet adapted to the earth. Already men are so adapted, that they have got to like the smell of flowers, which dogs seem to dislike. In Europe pain in child-birth is abolished by a vapour which mothers inhale ; so with toothache ; wrinkles can be prevented by facial exercises, or cured by a simple operation of the knife. In Europe the principal cause of sorrow is now not wrinkles nor toothache, but poverty ; but already our priests, or ' scientists,' as priests are called there, have proved that the cause of poverty is the fact that certain persons are considered by Governments to ' own ' the countries of nations, out of which wealth comes : so our poverty may now soon be abolished. And so on. And this process of adaptation to the earth will no doubt work on interminably, for the earth is a bird of Eternity. You say that you hear that already love is very, very sweet : well, yes ; and it will become ever more and more sweet—tweaking sweet, you said, like an eel twitching, and each instant of life twitching sweet, when the host of Life shall arrive at home, and God shall have wiped all tears from the eyes of Life."

Leaning keenly toward her, he was looking at her with eyes which seemed to yearn to eat her, while she, like the ostrich, kept her eyes averted from that menace of being eaten ; till, chancing to catch sight of a moisture of piety in his eyes, she looked kindly at him, their eyes met, and she then said : " You know a lot of things. You will tell me : and what all those things in your waggons good for."

" Very good," he answered ; adding : " Let it be soon."

" Why soon ? " she wished to know : " that true that you want to go from me ? "

" Oh, not from—*with* you," he said. " But, anyway, I must go."

"Why?"

"Well—but—I cannot spend my life in Wo-Ngwanya; have work to do; I being a priest in my country—priest meaning '*elder*,' one who *knows more* than children, our priests (the real ones) devoting their lives to finding out new truths about the workings of Eternal Power. So I have to go to do this."

At which she smiled faintly, saying: "Yes, you know more than children; but you something like a child, Cobby."

"In what way?" he sharply asked.

"You soon see. You would not go, if you could."

Words at which Cobby turned very pale, and half rose, crying out: "And could I not, if I would?"

With a forehead of rock, not looking at him, she answered: "What you expect? You come to take me; me take you."

"*My God*," he breathed in English.

"Yes, 'my God,'" she grimly said in English.

Red rushed impetuously up his face. "Oh, this is tyranny, Flora Macray!"

"My name is Spiciewegiehotiu," she mentioned with a flush.

"Is it not tyranny?"

"Of course. Me a tyrant."

"Yes, over your own people! but I am the free subject of another sovereign——"

"Ah! me laugh at the other sovereign. Let him come and fetch you, me chuck his chitterlings to the choughs. You have only one sovereign, Cobby."

"*I* am *yours!*" he cried aloud in a heat of imperiousness.

"What! You talk to me like that?" she called with a shrewish tongue, stooping forward to stare into his face.

And back he stared at her. "Yes, I talk to you like that. Now, what will you do? Bite off my head?"

She reflected on this, her eyelids dropped, and quietly she said: "Me not take off heads with my

teeth, Cobby ; and yours too big and red, and know too much, it give me belly-ache if me swallow it. But you not mean it ! You not want to go ! Cobby want to be priest to me. So stay—me treat you well —make you a great man when me see my way, you teaching us to make *shoo-gah* and other things, and helping us fight. Me just going to fight Daisy, and me want you to train a regiment of sharpshooters in rifle-firing, and be their captain. Our rifles not very good, but every day now we expecting a caravan of Arabs, and me have five hundred tusks of ivory to buy rifles : me and you stun Daisy deaf and dumb with sudden thunder."

But Cobby was not won. " I don't want to stun Daisy," he said : " I was led to consider myself set free, and now I find myself still a prisoner. I cannot stand it ! I am free, free, free, and your master ! By heaven, if you treat me with indignity, I shall manage somehow to throw off this ignominy of soul that has me in the gutter. You say I don't want to go, and unfortunately—unfortunately !—that is somewhat so—I am become your little dog, pitiably grovelling and sneaking to see your feet go by . . . I like the walk, so rich in energy, in freedom and intolerance—the hips swing, the shoulders swing in counter-tune and antiphony—sister dear—— But no, I won't stand it !—I'd rather die—I divine the hardness and artfulness of your heart, and *I* am quite the wrong—*Why*, may I ask, is this war with Daisy to take place ? "

He was now standing, and she, cocking her eye upward at him quietly replied : " Me have reasons, Cobby ! "

" Well, I wait : tell me the reasons."

She smiled. " No ; if me tell you, you think too much of yourself."

But he, not divining that part of her war-aims was to advance him in the State, misunderstood her meaning, and answered : " You see, you treat me with indignity. That will make a white priest vain to be admitted into the counsels of a negro Queen !

But do you imagine for a moment that I would take part in the slaughter of many men without so much as knowing the right and wrong of the quarrel ? "

Still she smiled. " There is no ' quarrel ' ; the quarrel coming ; then me fight."

" Meaning that *you* will make the quarrel ? " he cried out : " do you mean to say that a girl—so young —so fair—can bear to wash her hands in the blood of thousands—— ? "

Her forehead puzzled at him. " Men grow like grass," she remarked : " if you kill two, soon four spring in their place, and, if they have a ruler with eyes, the new ones better than the old."

Now, this truth was all in tune with his own mental habit, though all contrary to his moral habit, and at the contradiction *in himself*, he stood still more hot and cross with *her* simple vision.

" Grow like grass ? Yes ! True ! But for a young girl—you will be a dear mother some day—you will rock a babe in your dear arms——"

" Well, maybe, why not ? When it smell good, me rock it."

" Oh, fie—cynical. But there will be no rifle-firing, understand, by *my* training——"

" Oh, Cobby," she muttered with reproach, " you try my patience."

" And you try mine ! "

At which she laughed, asking : " We always going to quarrel like this ? "

" Always ! Always !—unless you do what I *tell* you."

" Cobby, listen : if you think you mine, you live happy ; if you think me yours, you get into trouble."

" More threats ! more indignity ! "

" Me not threatened you before ! Sometimes you talk wild." Now she smiled. " Me think Sir Cobby in love. A lion worry him."

" In love with whom ? " he eagerly asked.

She shrugged. " Maybe with Sueela."

" No, say it—you shall."

" Sueela," she said, smiling up into his face. " May-

be some day, if you very good, me give you Sueela. *Me* going to marry her brother, Sandelikatze. Perhaps you heard."

"Ha! ha! ha! My sublime rival! My lily competitor!"

"But suppose me like him! Nice firm boy."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

Now she flung her face frankly to him. "Oh, Cobby, you mad in love—a forest on fire——"

"And *you?*" he whispered near: "you?"

Askance she eyed him, up and down, and down and up, with supercilious inspection.

"Well, now I am all surveyed," he testily said: "what is my doom?"

"You think me weak in the head?" she demanded.

"No, I don't think so——"

"Cobby, a Queen know how to plan and work: if she not know, she not a Queen—she *dirt*." With endless disdain her lips curled. "You go where my finger point, give up all thought of going away, with me or without me, and maybe some day you wash in joy, your belly go 'Oh' for fulness of the food of the gods. If you not do what me tell you, me say you get into trouble, maybe you die. No, me not think you die; no, not that. But, if temptation come to you, and you plot with anybody against me, you get into trouble, you taste the rage of my jealousy. Meantime, till the rifles arrive, you have all you want; live happy; play with the girls like Caray——"

"You are to understand," Cobby haughtily interrupted, "that there is no resemblance between Macray and me, except in skin."

"You think me not know?" she muttered. "And, talking of Caray, me want you to tell Caray something from me: say me not want to kill him, because me see that he may be useful to me some day; and he can play with all the girls, say: but, if any Mo-Ngwanya girl ever shed a tear because of him, and me get to know, he finished, he done for. Let him know. Me give him plenty of goods to buy a wife or two, if he

want wife. And now you and me have talked together : me give you snuff, and something to drink." She clapped her palms. " Later we discuss more. When you want to see me, me let you. That please you ? "

This she said in a confidence at which Cobby groaned " sweet," but then at once broke out : " But the whole interview is unsatisfactory !—and not one word about Panda ! When, pray, is Panda to be set free ? "

She shook her head. " Never, Cobby."

" What ! . . . my God. . . ."

" Or—yes—maybe some day, when me see my way. But not for a long time."

" But why ? *Why ?* The man has done nothing —— Look here, I refuse to be free, I will go back to ' The Elephant——' "

" Cobby, you can't, unless me send you. Think why me keep him prisoner—it is easy to see——"

" No, I *don't* see——" he span to see Sueela enter asmile, looking mockery under her eyes at him, bearing a vessel and three mugs, the vessel bound round with strings to keep down a bung in it, which, when the strings were cut, rushed out, foam showering out of the vessel's mouth.

But Cobby crossly refused the proffered cup. " No, I won't," he protested : " I am very offended,"—whereat Sueela pulled a long face and goggles of mock-awe at the dreadfulness of the etiquette, while the Queen, slinging a knee, looked keenly up into his face, saying : " Cobby, drink—me command."

" Command away—it's no good ! " cried Cobby.

She reflected on the situation ; then held out her hand. " Cobby can kiss my hand."

And immediately he was at it, down on his knees like the Brahmin muttering prayer, pressing kisses on it here and there, on palm and back.

" Now drink," she suggested.

And he stood up, grumbling, " Oh, well, I suppose——" and took the mug.

And bows of ritual betwixt cup and lip were cut between the three drinkers.

As to the drink, "Never," Cobby wrote afterwards, "have I tasted anything half so nice—nor, indeed, conceived that any flavour *can* be so delightful, the best champagne being very far inferior to this spiritual thing. Cross and preoccupied as I was, I felt impelled to ask the name of it, and was told 'sorrel drink.' I now have it in abundance, for the next morning an area of jars came to me. She is rich and liberal; but she shall find that I am not to be petted and bought. . . ."

No sooner had he drunk than he saw two gigantic bodyguards at the tree-entrance, and the Queen said: "They conduct you to the gate. Good health."

Half going, half lingering, he put out arms of appeal, pleading: "Will you have pity upon Panda?"

"Good health," she repeated, bowing him out; and headlong he went.

She then let herself lie on her face; and Sueela, looking down on her, presently remarked: "My goodness, he nearly eat your hand"; on which Spiciewegiehotiu's shoulder suddenly shuddered with chuckling, and she sat up, saying: "A miss is as good as a mile!"

Sueela then wished to know: "What you tell him about Panda to make him so cross?"

"Me tell him me keep the man in prison. What he can expect? He think me let him have a servant of his own to help him carry me off, or escape without me? But he won't want to run away and leave Panda behind, so that's another reason why me keep his Panda in prison. His Caray would be in prison, too, only—— Look here"—she showed the locket —"Caray steal the picture."

"My mother, why he steal it?" Sueela breathed, all in awe.

"It appears now," the Queen answered, "that the reason Caray not want Cobby to carry me to that country is that it is Caray himself has my father's goods, so Caray not want me to go to get the goods from him, and he steal the picture, which would prove that me my father's daughter. Eheh, that is it."

"Well!" went Sueela, scandalized: "me kill the thief, if me was you."

"Not me," said the Queen: "till the day Cobby forget his country, Caray one of my spies and body-guards against Cobby and Dzinikulu."

"But a thief——! Me wouldn't have believed. . . . If you not want to cut off his head, circumcise the rascal! then he won't be quite so cheeky."

The Queen eyed her coldly aside. "How you know he not circumcised already?"

"My goodness! somebody tell me."

"Who tell you? Maybe the sorrel drink get into your head, and now the truth coming out."

"All right, keep on about that, my girl!"

Spiciewegiehotiu, suddenly lost in a reverie, did not answer; and presently Sueela, musing: "Cobby pretty. My God, he very pretty."

The Queen said nothing, and presently again Sueela, musing: "Me wonder if Cobby circumcised?"

Now the Queen started out of reverie. "You better go and ask him! Maybe he give you a present you not soon forget."

Sueela shook her face slowly. "No, not Cobby. Cobby a god. But tell me all he say to you, and you say to him."

"Come, let us walk." She sprang up, they passed out, and, with arms round waists, paced long the avenue's moss in step, tall daughters of the gods together, walking with that length of ankle and lordly leg of Man, predominantly walking his planet at last.

XVIII

WAR-DRUMS

"THE whole place is now transformed," Cobby presently wrote: "ordinary industry is cast to the winds, almost all work having become war-work, and something extremely like fever seems to have seized upon all the people, equally on fire being the eyes of the lad of fifteen and the man of sixty, equally they dance and stare and wave their arms: I call it 'the dancing-sickness'—all wheels in dance, a wicked and mad dancing, which means 'Kill! Kill!' Every day dreadful kerry-battles take place in the Square between regiment and regiment, with the Queen as spectator of cracked skulls, fractured bones, disablements and deaths, as in the actual battlefield; and from morning to night athletic exercises are the order of the day. This afternoon in the east of the town I found within one hour three different priests rousing crowds to frenzies of venom: Daisy was the enemy of Man! Daisy was the stink-cat, the man of sin, the ripper of women and children! At the name Daisy the lip spits. I saw two women quarrelling, and with a scorn which shrieked each hurled at the other the taunt of having some M'Niami blood, and being a dirty pro-Daisy. And in every direction the thud of drums dumbly thumping, thumping, and the tramp of marchers marching somewhither under some motive."

The trouble (as understood by Cobby and the public) was as follows:—

Daisy had sent to Spiciewegiehotiu an embassy to request the hand of Sueela in marriage.

Spiciewegiehotiu had replied: "Very good. How much for her?"

Daisy had then replied: "Thirty head of cattle."

This was wanton ; this was picking a quarrel ; this was war. Daisy was out to waste Wo-Ngwanya. . . .

Now, about this time Spiciewegiehotiu had bought largely in rifles from a caravan, and when the quarrel broke out she had summoned Cobby to lay the case of Daisy before him.

On which Cobby, little suspicious as he was, had cried out : " It is hard to believe ! You have as good as told me yourself that you meant to pick a quarrel with Daisy."

" Yes," she had said, " but Daisy not give me time : *he* pick the quarrel—you *see*, no ? "

" Yes, I see—since you say so."

" So now you train the regiment, no ? When we beat Daisy, everybody say *you* beat him, *you* bring luck."

" I don't care at all what everybody will say," he had answered, not fathoming her aims in respect of himself ; on which she had shut up her lips with a resentful pressure.

But in the end he had undertaken to captain the regiment, nor was it until afterwards that it began to be whispered that Daisy's request for Sueela's hand had not been spontaneous, but had been *suggested* to him by an agent of Spiciewegiehotiu, on the ground that that marriage would cement the friendly relations between Spiciewegiehotiu and Daisy ; also that Daisy had really meant to offer, not thirty, but *three thousand*, cattle as *lobola* for Sueela, but that on the night of the arrival of the M'Niami embassy, who were lodged in the sigodhlo, a pair of Spiciewegiehotiu's officers had given the embassy the diplomatic hint that wealth was no object in this matter with the Queen, who had other objects ; that the embassy would receive in the morning from the Queen a basket of peaches—let them offer just so many cattle as there were peaches in the basket, and this would please the Queen. The peaches had duly come, as foretold —thirty peaches ; but when at the Queen's council the same day the ambassadors had offered thirty

cattle, Spiciewegiehotiu in sorrowful majesty had turned her back upon them, and without a word walked out.

And now much ado. The embassy had been sent back without an answer. Then ambassador after ambassador from Daisy, protesting that the three heads of the original embassy had been cut off for thus insulting Wo-Ngwanya, that he was willing to pay a double *lobola*. . . . But Spiciewegiehotiu's wound was too profound for forgiveness or listening. How could she now trust Daisy? Let Daisy draw his sword: her sword was drawn.

Thus fell out what the Wa-Ngwanga call "The Third M'Niami War": and all the drums rumbled.

Now, Cobby had a servant called Sansiwana who, while Cobby was eating a meal, often conversed with him; Sansiwana had a niece married to a M'Niami man; and one forenoon when Cobby came home from Black River, where he had set up bulls'-eyes for rifle-practice, he first heard from Sansiwana the version of the quarrel as commonly understood among the M'Niami: on which his face flushed with indignation at the consciousness that he had been gulled like Tom, Dick and Harry, and, instantly resolving to wash his hands of that war, he hurried away to see the Queen, at that hour at White River: and that way he went to intercept her.

As he passed out of his gate, he found waiting there an army-officer, who, profoundly bowing, placed in his hand a little square of wood, and went away without saying anything. Cobby knew him as an officer of Dzinikulu's brigade, and, on seeing an elephant, a boat, and the sun behind a hill, carved on the wood, he understood that Dzinikulu desired an interview with him at "The Elephant" after sunset.

He then went on out of the town and through the very sylvan scene within which White River winds, of which he writes: "It is not the name only that is a poem, but the river itself, tearing lacerated along through rocks, transacting its odyssey in long hexa-

meter lines of froth and song betwixt forested cliffs and fairylands of frondage, spray of lofty palmyra-leafage, light-green of date-palm, gloomy motsuri, festoons of orchilla-weed, homes of flamingos, black geese, parrots, here or there a hut peering through. Not all Wo-Ngwanya huts are round, some being oblong, built upon piles, looking within their secret places of greenery so at home and old in the universe, that they produce a swooning sense of beauty and fitness which not all the buildings of Greece and Italy, placed there, could give : and I suddenly remember them, feeling that I have beheld them in sceneries of Heaven in the eras before I left my home to tour the suns.

" When I came to that spot where the river falls three feet in two falls between three rocks, I paused, taking my station under the shade of a mopane, the sun being pretty hot in spite of strong breeze. I could see no one, but, knowing that the bathing is under the two falls, I waited, till, after some minutes, I saw Sueela come out of bush on the opposite shore, and make across the water, anon skipping the rocks, anon wetting the bottom of her Egyptian kilt.

" All eyes and smiles she came, and when I stepped to meet her, says she : ' Spiciewegiehotiu say What you want ? She say Her hair wet, and she not want anybody to see her."

" I answered that I wanted to announce at once something in respect of the war, and was not thinking of her hair, which I should not look at at all.

" ' Me tell her,' says she, and back she walked through the forty yards of brawling water to vanish into bush.

" Then again she emerged, again journeyed across, and, spluttering sniggerings, says she : ' Spiciewegiehotiu say You like giiirrrls ! That why you come to see them bathe. But that very bad for you.'

" To this I answered : ' Be good enough to tell that lady that there is no truth at all in this, since my only motive was to talk of the war.'

"So back she waded in formal embassy, a black Aphrodite through frothing white, and again presently in formal embassy wades back to say with spluttering of laughter: 'Spiciewegiehotiu say Your hair raaad!'

"'Really? . . . But in what connection is this announcement made?' I demanded. 'Do you mean to say she sent you all this way just to tell me that? Tell her I say I knew. Tell her I say hers is black.'

"With bogey-eyes aside on me, she answered: 'Black hair not hot like raaad!'

"'Hot, ? . . . You're a goose,' I said: 'you're a black goose.' But this is an English idiom, and, 'Why me like a goose?' she wished to know; to which I answered: 'Because you spread out your fingers like a goose, and quack nonsense-announcements.'

"'They good to eat, geese,' she remarks, her eyes cast down.

"'Yes, and you, too,' I absurdly said. 'But ask that lady if I may see her.'

"'Me tell her, and that her hair black'—and back she paced.

"Then again she came, this time to say: 'Spiciewegiehotiu say How long you going to keep her hiding in there? She say Go way, and she send for you when she want to talk about the war.'

"'Well, I suppose I must obey,' I said, 'good-bye'; and in a habitual way I put out my hand, which she took with her face averted, and never was my hand pressed in such a spasm—she hurt me! I don't understand why; then ran, as if chased.

"I did not at the time suspect that all this about 'hair' and 'girls bathing' might be deliberate chicanery; but the suspicion has since visited me that what I was there to say may have been conjectured, and an interview with me shunned, that I might have no chance of saying it.

"I went away, but not far, and from under a hut in jungle watched her go past with her enterprising gait within her circle of girls who giddily whispered

together and giggled ; then, returning to the falls and water-pool, I bathed there, wallowing with enjoyment in the warmth of the water in which she had washed, till I laughed at my nonsense, *that* water being then well on its way to the sea—a nonsense like the good Tennyson's, ' men may come, and men may go, but *I* go on for ever.' ' I ' *what ?* Crude Victorian person, now—so muddle-headed, unsceptical, is the habit of the uneducated mind, unclarified and unhardened by the habit of science. Any individual drop of ' the brook ' does not ' go on for ever,' but ' comes and goes,' exactly like the individual man, and the race, the brook, of men ' goes on for ever,' exactly like the brook of drops. So that we have contrast insisted upon where simile is complete.

" Pressed to do something, to say my say, at four in the afternoon I called at the royal entrance, knowing that her review of the manœuvres was then over : but I ' could not ' be seen. She had promised to see me whenever I wished, and the suspicion visited me then that there is a motive for this invisibility, that I am being fooled, and used as a tool. But I *will not* be so used ; I *will not* take part in a butchery on the unjust side. Until then I had been doubtful about going to meet Dzinikulu, but now decided to go ; for if by any means I can get out of this imprisonment, this tutelage and servitude, and get her, not over me, but under me, as is right, I grasp those means. And they may be nearer than I have imagined. When, on passing after dark through the thronged awna and out to ' The Elephant,' I met Dzinikulu, he represented his plans as far advanced, and his hopes in bloom. Our discussion was in a punt in the dense dark under ' The Elephant,' and I felt myself something of a conspirator, but see no other way out, except the impossible way of spending my existence in this place. Dzinikulu says he can depend upon half the elderly men in the army, and upon all his own officers ; thinks the war our luck, since some chance is sure to present itself when the Queen takes the field ; and advises me

on no account to withdraw from captaining the rifles, since my presence at the front in a natural way is so desirable. I found that he, too, quite knows that Daisy is not the provoker, but the provoked ; and I told him that, this being so, even if I go to the front with the rifles, nothing will induce me to captain them in battle. He also informed me, what I can hardly credit, that *Sueela*, too, is now on our side ! he being in possession of some secret of hers, and she having sent him ' a basket of mawas ' as pledge of her adherence : in spite of which he is chary of trusting her with the secret of any plan, unless it be necessary.

" It was after ten when we parted, and, on coming home, I found awaiting me a visitor, my Macray, distinctly tipsy, but still inquisitive as to my movements, as to the nature of my interviews with ' Spicey,' as to why *I* was put to drill the riflemen when *he* is the better shot—as he said—and when last I had seen ' his ' Sue, who, he says, is lately shunning him. ' You have no Sue,' I told him, and then told him what the Queen had bid me tell as to his bringing calamity upon any Mo-Ngwanya girl, also of her notion that he had stolen the photograph, and I bid him beware ; to which he answered : ' Let *her* beware—who is *she ?* I am getting fed up with this—my cigars are giving out —and if there is no solution soon, I'll force one '—I don't know what he meant, if anything. He becomes insolent and intolerable ; and soon I got rid of him. . . ."

XIX

BATTLE

THE following morning Cobby again presented himself at the royal gate—surprised to find only one guardsman, who in turn was surprised at his request to see the Queen. "You not know the Queen gone?" he was asked; and discovered that she had left Eshowe at break of day.

Feeling slighted and tricked, sore and bitter, he was off straightway to find Ngdeiho, the commander of the army, passing in the awna through a teeming scene of war-business, swarms of horses, of oxen lowing, parks of carts, brigades at bivouac, regiments at breakfast; for the last contingents of the northern and western army divisions had come in over-night; and, in passing through it all, he saw marching southward and outward two regiments, whose movement represented the initial flowing of the host toward the front.

He was coldly received by Ngdeiho pacing in his park west of the awna, and when the announcement was made that Cobby, for his part, did not intend to captain his men in any actual battle, white teeth of all the warriors who surrounded the old general showed themselves in a sneer, the general himself languidly drawing his finger across his throat, hinting of danger there for someone. For the favours shown to Cobby, his elevation to an army command, were curious, perplexing and *mal vus*, especially in army circles. Of his own riflemen, though he had the admiration of some, the manners of others exhibited hostility in actual insolence: for the novelty of the *umlungos* (whites) had worn thin, and familiarity, owing mainly to Macray, had bred contempt, they little knowing what lightning and thunder is up the white man's sleeve, and the manners of the Almighty.

"You should tell a thing like that to the Queen herself," the old Ngdeiho said, frowning.

"I have failed to get a chance," Cobby answered.

"Her Majesty will now judge the courage of the men of your colour," the general remarked.

"You are not to be cheeky!" Cobby promptly responded with a cocked chin.

On which general and staff eyed him up and down, with scowling, till Ngdeiho pointed. "Be gone in time!" and Cobby went away, saying: "Let the Queen know quickly."

Scout after scout, meantime, was coming in: Daisy had taken the initiative! was being helped by Sebingwe! had invaded Wo-Ngwanya! was in greater force by some four thousand assegais! and fleeing before his dancing imps and impis were the inhabitants of the land. By three in the afternoon the great square of Eshowe was emptied, but for two regiments and Cobby's riflemen, who also were called "a regiment," though but seven hundred strong, most of the Wo-Ngwanya stock of firearms having proved to be old carbines, which, as they had lowered his average of smartness, he had cut out. And soon after three he, too, on receiving marching-orders, started out, Macray looking like Sancho Panza on a nag under his Ali's flank, group after group of damsels dancing mad darting out from the multitude to dance before the advance of his drums and standard, and clap their frantic palms; and down the course of Black River eastward the way was, he keeping in touch with a regiment which preceded him.

Meantime, somewhere in the eastern blue and infinity of the day, the Queen, within a group of ten riders, held at her eyes a field-glass with which Macray had presented her, and anon was fleeing out of the way of advance patrols of the enemy.

And so for three days. When, during the forenoon of the fourth, Cobby's battalion, singing the war-song, came up with the war-host, it was to witness war-dancing, and conflict imminent, the armies being

ranked on a plain, with a horizon of hills which on the south were mountains, a river flowing southward through it, to tumble with a roaring and smoking into precipice that bounded the plain on the south ; and on its west bank the Wa-Ngwanya had set up at intervals five miles of stockade.

Far to the east Cobby's glass could make out two villages, and, standing apparently in fields of millet before an edge of forest the front of the M'Niami army long drawn out ; and while he looked, the old Wo-Ngwanya general, Ngdeiho, came cantering down the slope from the western hills to the host west of the water, to send out orders for the advance, on which his army began a barking of the throat and thorax that gruffed Ho ! and Ho ! like hundred-ton guns going off, tremendous, terrorizing.

Cobby, meantime, imagined that his decision to take no part in the battle had been duly communicated to the Queen ; but, in truth, the old Ngdeiho, for reasons of his own unfriendly to Cobby, had said not a word to her ; being, moreover, of an old school, and having a conservative dislike of rifles, he had determined to win the fight without them, since Cobby's revolt offered him the opportunity.

But, in fact, the rifles were a main part of the Queen's plan of battle ; and, on spying from the hills the arrival of Cobby's riflemen, she had let fall the remark : " Daisy ought to have attacked two hours ago : now me have him."

The enemy being in greater force, she meant to surprise them at the height of the fighting with more frightfulness of rifle-fire uproar than they had ever dreamt of, and, their morale thus shattered, meant to launch among them a second astonishment of cavalry, which she had well hidden in forest.

The Wa-Ngwanya crossed the river at a trot, gruffing their rough grunts in rhythm with their trotting footfalls, and " not all the Uhlans and Gardes Cavalleries galloping with sabres waving into battle," Cobby writes, " could offer a sight more gallant than

that host of negroes careering with streaming headgears, trailing kilts of tails, knee tails, elbow tails, with tufted shields, sheaves of spears sheening, many of them patterns of athlete manhood. And about a mile east of the river the armies crashed with a row which clearly reached us, which at closer quarters must have been, as old Marco Polo says, ' like heaven's thunder.' "

But it was not long before Daisy's weight of numbers commenced to make itself felt ; not long before, southward, he was attempting with some success a flanking movement ; and just then a messenger from the western hills came racing down to Cobby.

He, lying in a little wood of wild coffee behind his battalion, who, too, lay about the ground, gazing at the battle, was suddenly conscious of a despatch-rider drawing up on his haunches to throw off the message : " Captain, the Queen say Attack now halfway between the centre and the south."

Cobby sprang up appalled.

" Has the Queen not been told that I am not going to lead the rifles ? " he demanded.

" No, she say Go now ! Not stop to talk ! " the messenger urgently shouted.

Meantime, many of the riflemen were crowding round to stare, while Cobby stamped a little about, pestered with weight of responsibility, at his wits' end, until he said sharply to the messenger, " Fly, now ! Say that I sent to tell the Queen days ago—ask if I shall send them forward under a lieutenant—fly ! "

Amid a groaning of the men who heard it, the messenger turned and galloped, flogging his nag ; and those round Spiciewegiehotiu asserted later that when she saw him returning, and waited, and the guns did not stir, she slowly turned pale to death, went faint, let her forehead drop down upon her horse's neck.

Meantime, with every minute the Wa-Ngwanya were being involved in deeper distress and loss of blood, and the M'Niami, pressing forward, were presently treading upon enemy dead ; rueing to see which, Cobby was keenly on the look out for an answer to

his message, and when he saw two horsemen galloping down the hills, he, imagining that they were for him, called his men to 'tention ; but the horsemen did not come near him, steering their race for the forest in which the cavalry waited ; and presently out of the forest in column of sections came tearing a storm of horses in staring haste, swept away between two lengths of the stockade, crossed the stream, and after darting past their own army, pounced howling among the host of foemen.

But though no little disarray and death resulted, the disarray was transitory—cavalry combat being, in fact, foreign to black armies. The old Ngdeiho had a prejudice against it, as had Daisy, nor had there been cavalry in Wo-Ngwanya before Spiciewegiehotiu, who herself employed it rather to awe than to slaughter. In general, the mass of riders could not contrive to cohere in the *mêlée*, and when his animal was speared, the man, finding himself isolated in a grove of iron, gave up the ghost.

All which Cobby saw with his heart in his mouth, feeling that, if she was defeated through him, that would be more than was good for his compunction ; and seeing the sidling eyes of his men on him, and no answer coming to his message, he was thinking of repeating the message, when he became aware of the Queen herself sweeping down on her Selim well ahead of half a dozen chargers which rushed after her, she rushing down like a sharp shower to her army, to gallop past not twenty yards from him, with never a glance his way, her Selim's eyes wide, his ears lying flat back like a cat's, the battery of his hoofs thrumming the sod with a strong rolling of drums, she like a jockey wedded head-down to his neck, and, because of the horns that vaulted from her helmet, resembling a bull bounding head-down along, to butt and toss. And across the river-rocks she crashed, across the savannah, to vanish in the throng of champions.

Cobby in a sort of rapture, went red in the face, shouting after her " *Cœur de Lion !* "

But Spiciewegeihotiu was of another type: not lion's heart, but man's head, nor valour, but discretion, being her trait; and though a rally did follow her advent in the battle-ranks, her object was not to rally, but rapidly to withdraw: for her eye, ever quick, simple-seeing, and sure of itself, had spied that the day was lost for her. She rode straight for the old Ngdeiho, screaming at him: "Why you not retreat?" and ere long the tom-toms were beating it.

Then she showed some lion's heart: for to the river itself she remained with her men in the thick of the retreat, sometimes hustled, harassed, prancing, an arrow sticking out of Selim's bosom like a bowsprit riding a rough sea. And in Parthian order the Wa-Ngwanya stepped backward and back, streaming with sweat of afternoon heat, white as black can be, with wide and snorting nostril, but still—in good order. And now they were at the river, soon to find themselves behind their miles of stockade and wire-entanglements of spiked mimosa; and then it was Daisy who pretty quickly was thinking of retreat.

Cobby saw the sovereign, looking very haggard, canter back up past his battalion, without glancing his way; and it was with a disquietude within him that he went out with the carts and stretchers of rimpi, whose Red Cross was crimson branches of (young) matchebela, he taking surgical instruments and anæsthetics, to stoop among the wounded on the stricken field, where he saw a scene of slaughter even now not over, for the hopelessly wounded of both peoples were speared by their own comrades, a scene that made Cobby so sick, that often he was hissing words like "that murderess!" "that cursed girl!"

He went back pallid, and there again before him near the river was the Queen on horseback in front of what was left of the cavalry; and though she addressed them rather in sorrow than in wrath, every head was bent before her. "Go back home," Cobby could just hear her say: "me win without you; me

not give you a chance to fail again : go back home." As he drew near, she cantered away westward.

He now saw himself an object of scorn among all the Wa-Ngwanya : for the news of his refusal to fight had flown, his death was being foretold, and the man who bore him his evening meal threw it before him ; nor could he explain the *motif* of his revolt, for that would have been very indecorous, militarily, politically ; and alone—Macray having taken himself off somewhither to prowl after Sueela—he sat till late, watching a swarming army scene of flames and men, messages, hastes, neighings, lowings, drummings, a great going to and fro and maëlstrom of utterance ; then went to climb into a hut on piles within a spinny of palmyras nigh under the hills, a lonesome old room covered with a roof broken and bent by its own weight, on whose bumpy floor for a bed he flung himself.

But just before he slept, he started up, conscious, dark as it was in there, of some presence with him, and, snatching his revolver, he sharply asked : " Who are you ? "

" Cobby, my heart broken," muttered the dejected voice of one seated near him.

" *You !* "

" Cobby, why you treat me so to-day ? "

" By heaven ! You ? But did I not send to tell you—— ? If you have been shocked, whose fault ? You have shunned me—— Yes, you suspected that I now know by whom all this slaughter was wantonly brought about, and, so that I might have no chance of resigning my command, you shunned me, imagining that when actually on the battle-field I should be impelled to obey the command to advance—— You little know me——"

" But to-morrow you will, for me, no ? "

" No, I will—*not.*"

Now she put her hand on his : and now there was stillness, he sitting there thrilled through and through.

And on a sudden he roughly had her hand to possess himself of her, on which she sprang sharp up, he after ;

she ran, he after ; she dodging him to and fro, twisting like a swift, no word uttered, he working in an earnest dumbness but once to clap hand on her and rumple her by supremacy of muscle and summary pre-eminence of strength, and like dog and fox " at the death " they spurted, like a whirl of serpents doubling upon themselves, till for some moments he lost her, but then, alert of ear, heard her feet stealing, rushed upon her, and had her crushed soft to his body like a doll of rubber, teeth to teeth.

" Oh, Cobby," she panted at him, " don't—kiss me like that, me—tear you to pieces."

He, handling her roughly, with sudden movements like convulsions of epilepsy, panted between feasts of kisses : " Murderess—gory hag—sweet as hell—well-beloved, by God—but cruel as the grave. . . ."

And she, amid mixed half-pants, ranting half-words : " Oh, Cobby, you eat——"

" Yes—food——"

" Who you love, you madman ? "

" You ! "

" Oh, Cobby, a dog bite us. . . . Me he bite, then his red teeth poison you. . . . Cobby . . . Cousin Cobby . . . me show you own flesh and blood. . . . So, Cobby, now you fight, no ? "

Like ice upon white-hot this fell upon him ; and in the same instant they stood separated, his soul wounded with the pernicious suspicion that even her kisses were political, even her gales calculated, that she gave nothing, but bartered everything, her brain ever half an inch ahead of her heart.

" Would I not fight and die a thousand times—— ! " he cried out. " If your quarrel was just, there would be no need for me to *fight :* I can shatter and abolish a hundred African armies, just so lightly as you brush off a fly ! As it is, I will—*not*—— "

Now, to *her* mental habit both his boast and his moral motive were, of course, equally unreal and foreign, and " What ! " she shrilly cried out with a stamp, " you say that after daring to kiss me ? "

And in an instant, as in "the transformation of forces," all that electromotive force of love changed into heat of quarrel.

"You put your hand on me!" he cried: "I did not divine that I was being tempted, in order to be bought. I will—*not*. There are under-officers who can command the rifles——"

"Pooh, you must be silly," she said bitterly, "if you not see that me want *you* to command them, and why me want."

"No, I don't see. . . . Why?"

"Oh, me go," she muttered disgustedly, moving toward the doorway: "me done with you. Everybody cry out on me to kill you, but you go back where you come from—me let you when you want."

"Good! Good! *I* am done with you, too. I am off home—I shall forget your long name."

"That's it!" she cried in a flush of quarrel, "you soon forget! and me forget even your short name! You go—no good staying now—Wo-Ngwanya turn you out—everybody say you 'fraid to fight! Our men can't stand that."

"Ha! ha! ha!" he redly laughed, "how can you think it possible that I could get myself to care a little what 'everybody says'? And how insolent of you to mention——"

"You go! Me done," she called over her shoulder just at the door.

"*Come back!*" he commanded in a rush and flush of mastery, and dashed after her.

Ten feet down she jumped, for some of those old ladder-rungs were missing; he jumped after her; she ran, he hard after. But, as there was no moon, and she flew straighter toward an end, he only came upon her when she had scrambled upon a horse, whose hoofs, as she galloped off, spattered grit into his face.

He then walked back through the palmyras with his forehead on his palm, and, as he arrived at the ladder, someone sprang up out of the ground and touched his shoulder—Dzinikulu.

XX

COUP D'ÉTAT

DZINIKULU could not conceal his elation at the event of the day's battle — Spiciewegiehotiu's prestige for unfailing victory gone—or shaken. The fact was, he told Cobby, that a large number of Sebingwe's men (north-west) had voluntarily flocked to join Daisy (north-east), thus swelling the M'Niami ranks, and Spiciewegiehotiu had bitten off more than she could chew! If the next day's engagement went against her, her star was in disaster. Anyway, everything was ready for the carrying off—Dzinikulu's all was staked upon it ; let Cobby never be far from Dzinikulu during the next days.

" Good ! " said Cobby, sore and hot against Spiciewegiehotiu, and again " good ! " led headlong by the lust of going out of captivity, not alone, but having his captor captive. . . .

" But not a word of anything to Caray," Dzinikulu said. " Leave Caray behind ; me soon send him home."

" No, I am not going without Macray and Panda," Cobby answered : " I don't understand why——"

" Well, then, we only tell Caray at the last moment —promise me that."

" Well, since you wish that. And I will wait south of the mountains till you send me my Panda."

" You wait long, then. The man dead."

Cobby stood dumb ; Dzinikulu adding : " Last thing I hear before I leave Eshowe. Got belly-disease. Foul air. He dead at last."

" Oh, my friend ! " Cobby cried out, " you died upbraiding me ! Oh, how hard of heart ! "

" Eheh, she hard," Dzinikulu agreed : " but wait—

maybe her sun setting. Her day of doom dawn to-morrow."

At the hour when this was said of her she, four miles southward, was pacing alone by the ravine's brink, leading her horse, anon peering down into the abyss, deeply pondering; and four miles westward on higher ground Macray was lying in bush, gazing through an Egyptian doorway into the ruins of a temple never built by Wa-Ngwanya hands, at the far end of which was a fire under a pot which a girl tended, and dim beyond the fire Sueela seated on a tooled stone of the ruins before her mother Mandaganya, who sat higher on a heap of stones, at Mandaganya's feet a little dog, shaggy like a terrier, called "Ronja," which was always near her, and was believed to be "a sensitive," gifted with intuitions still quicker than the witch's.

Macray could not hear the words of their dejected speech, only its murmur. "She very grum and angry," Sueela said: "me go to her, she not speak to me—she not speak to anybody. She say Go away."

Mandaganya's quiet eyes that interned within them a certain slumber and musing, rested on her daughter, as she remarked with some satisfaction: "Now she know white man frightened to fight, now she can't help killing him, for to-day he show himself the enemy of Wo-Ngwanya."

"No! you got it wrong," Sueela protested: "Sir Cobby not frightened to fight—not *he;* he have some other reason."

"She love him, no?" the witch asked, peering forward.

"Eheh."

"She love him much?"

"Eheh, me think so. They in love with one another like cats fighting."

"Danger in that man," the witch said, with one eye shrinking from the licks of a snake that lay round her brows, a band of freckles black and red: "something hanging over her, and that man in it." Now

the dog growled a little, and uttered a *woof*—so to say ; on which the doctoress looked round, and suddenly asked : " Where Sanja ? " meaning the cook-girl, who, having gone to gather fuel, had been pounced upon by Macray as a messenger, and now reappeared to say low to Sueela that somebody wanted her.

" Which somebody ? " demanded Mandaganya—" Caray ? " and when the cook-girl looked confused, " Better mind how you go," the doctoress said to her daughter with a nod and eye quiet yet weighty : " me show you white man, if it's white man you want. Spiciewegiehotiu tear out your liver, if you go a step too far, and if she not tear it out, me tear it out."

On which Sueela, standing up, cut an eye, saying : " Oh, me not care for *him :* me know a god ; me done with men "—and, having walked away into the darkness, said to Macray, her back on the ruin : " What you want ? "

" Susie-Susie," said Macray : " *my* Sue. What the devil has become of you ? Come on, let's get into the bush."

" No, me not going," she said, bending toward him, brushing him from each palm with the other : " me done, done, done. Me not like vicious men."

" No ? Sure, Sue-Sue ? Well, but *me* like vicious girls, you see, that's why me dote on Sue. Look here, none of that ! "—he gripped her bare arm, hurting her—" If you fancy you're going to use me once for a lark, and then cast me off as you've been doing, you'll find yourself up against the wrong man. I happen to want you, and I always have what I want. You dare try it on, and see if I don't go straight to Spiciewegiehotiu and your mother, and tell them everything."

A menace at which heart quailed, and laid down arms. At his raised voice the girl glanced nervously toward her mother, who, much more visible now than previously, stood Athene-big within the sheen of a fume, greenish, luminous, she then burning herbs and bdelliums to inhale the incense, and enwrap

herself in a state of "trance"; seeing which preoccupation, Sueela took quietly enough the marital domineering of Macray, though in the expression of her eyes a dangerous something smouldered.

"You hurting me," she mentioned. "How me to go with you when you see my mother there? Tomorrow after sunset you see me down the hill there."

Surrender—for the present.

"Very well. . . . Is that a bargain?"

"Yes." At once she walked away inward, and, as she went, her lips met vehemently to spit out disgust and gall.

When she came again to her mother, Mandaganya stood astare with muttering lips, the little dog whimpering piteously at her feet; and, leaning an ear near, Sueela could hear the sybil breathe: "She conquer—she chuckle at their rout—Cow that toss the nations. . . . But beware of a tree—trouble, trouble—the heart cease beating . . ." upon which the pillar that she was staggered, to collapse sideward upon the pile of stones, and lie quiet over the little Ronja, which huddled with shudderings under her.

Sueela then spread rugs for her mother, then picked a little supper with the little finger cocked aloft (this being considered *chic!*), then the long pipe, she clasping her knees, meditation in her eyes, then to sleep in fits; and before the sun rose was carrying out of the ruin her saddle of lamb-skin, to mount her Mustapha, and gallop a league nearer the front.

At the hut chosen by the Queen for herself Sueela was told that the Queen had gone abroad long before, and, riding on toward the river, she presently spied Spiciewegiehotiu among a number of men near the ravine; stopping to watch, she saw that a branch had been hacked from a tamarind tree and lashed to the tree's bottom, with one end projecting over the ravine's edge; and presently when an officer crawled along to that projecting end, the watcher's heart started to see him dash himself apparently down the precipice, the little crowd peering to see his ruin.

Then another went, and it was the same—he vanished ; then Spiciewegiehotiu went—and vanished ; and now Sueela, with a catch of the breath that laughed, said : " Oh, there must be a rope " ; but, even so, when she peered over the edge, her toes went cold, the scene of steepness and granite crag was so colossal, grand, and cosmic, on so solemn a scale, making men seem mosquitos. Till then no mortal had ever thought of going down that gulf.

Sueela ran nearer until she could actually see the rope of ifé, but since bush here and there lay on the cliff-wall, she could not see Spiciewegiehotiu, who, going down with her toes on the rock anon, was now not forty feet from the bottom, when she halted to look down and call crossly to the two men already down : " Why you not move away from there ? " for they, just below, like astrologers watching the ruin of the moon, were musing on the athletics of her descent, but now, at her outcry of protest, strolled with a sullen reluctance away ; and " come," she said breathlessly the moment her foot touched bottom, and ran toward the sun—a rough voyage, all rocks and jumps and bush ; on to where the river above came down, and changed to smokes that intoned, out of which they emerged drenched, to spurt on earnest, urgent, she ever ahead, losing never a moment, along the torrent's course, through a cañon anon so narrow, that there was scarcely space to step without wading through wet.

The sun grew hot, the going was hot, the two officers threw off karosses, anon tossed sweat from the forehead, but Spiciewegiehotiu was so constituted, that she could toil gaily along without heat or fatigue ; and when three zebras broke from brake, and galloped away before them, her gaiety of gait grew yet gayer, her legs got wings, and " Na ! my children," she sang out to them, " we coming to something—me feel the breeze of my luck on me," for the zebras meant an exit, which was what she was reconnoitring to find ; and, as she went, she kept an eye on their spoor.

After two hours of it she was walking up a ledge with the river left well below on her right ; and before long was peering out across the plain at Daisy's army all to the west of her, and no sentries anywhere near the ravine, believed to be inaccessible.

This was what she had scented and sought : and back she started, making such haste, that long before noon she was back at the rope ; and, on being drawn up, saw accomplished what she had commanded—an impi posted with its right on the ravine, and a large number of branches lashed to trees, carrying ropes that hung into the abyss.

As soon as she arrived she ordered an attack by all the army, except the rifles and the impi at the ravine—a feint attack meant to keep the enemy busy. By one o'clock Daisy had flung it back to its stockades, then himself retreated, himself seriously bleeding, for the Wa-Ngwanya had battled like devils. And again soon after two Spiciewegiehotiu launched an attack with the same orders, which had the same result ; but now, in that hour of repeated defeat, to each regiment, as it rested, she sent out strychnia (orange-cider) and a message : " Spiciewegiehotiu say Daisy done. Still one struggle for you before sunset, and then you drink victory like strychnia."

Meantime, even her own troops supposed that the impi posted near the ravine was still there ; but all these hours the three rear-ranks of its four ranks had, squad by squad, been descending into the ravine with ration and weapon ; of them two men only, having lost nerve, hurtled to death at the bottom ; the others, fourteen thousand, having passed down the cañon, cast themselves upon the back of the M'Niami army in a moment when the sunset battle was at its hottest : there they suddenly came hurtling, like hosts of spectres hurled up howling out of the hole of hell ; and never was surprise more wild, or fright more wide-eyed. The M'Niami army ran a rabble north-westward, like cataract-waters along the only path open to them,

and cast no eye behind: the Wa-Ngwanya in the half-dark darted after.

Among the last of the pursuers, cantering in a troop of six horsemen, was Spiciewegiehotiu, who suddenly drew rein, laughed, and remarked: "Me weary," for since daybreak, toiling constantly with brain and body, she had tasted nothing; and, as one of her six, a household-officer, carried a basket stuffed with foods and drink, soon the group was within the cave of a tree, where one M'Niami lay dead on his face with them, they seated round platters of wood on a skin, she carousing *en bon camarade* with her guests like a man-of-the-world among men, quaffing her liquor in a flush of spirits, all gossip and comment on the day's events; ever she said: "Na! my children"; and when one fellow said, "Yesterday me 'fraid the Queen get speared," she winked, and snapped her fingers, remarking: "Na! my children, the iron that is to pierce Spiciewegiehotiu not yet smelted!"—till all at once all were on their feet, pierced with the iron of the spear of fear, the tree surrounded, Dzinikulu filling the opening that looked southward, saying dryly, with a leg cocked: "Spiciewegiehotiu, you mine: me send you back to your own country."

Spiciewegiehotiu stood quite white, while half a chuckle, silly, hysteric, escaped her.

The brief twilight was done, but nut-tapers within the tree revealed her.

As Dzinikulu spoke, a clatter of hoofs was heard, and Cobby turned up in the same instant that two of the Queen's six, having recovered their wits, made a dash to use their short-spears (stabbers), and die; and even as the Queen called to them "Stop!" one dropped dead in the tree-entrance.

On which Dzinikulu, pale, but master of himself, said: "Come, lady—nothing to fear—everybody treat you well. You come, no?"

She bent her head in consent; whereupon Cobby, outside the tree, bid Dzinikulu send now for Macray.

"Where Caray is?" Dzinikulu asked, and when

Cobby answered: "Other side of the river somewhere," Dzinikulu shrugged, muttering, "Big space, 'somewhere,'" while Spiciewegiehotiu, with a conjurer-quickness, whispered to the nearest of her five: "*Caray with Sueela*"—which chanced to be true, though she did not suppose it true; but she hoped that, if one seeking Macray went to Sueela, Sueela might scent out what had happened.

At the same time Cobby said to Dzinikulu: "He won't be far—let him know now."

On which the fellow to whom the Queen had whispered volunteered information: "Me see Sir Caray go out to the ruin to see the lady Sueela, if you want Sir Caray."

And now Dzinikulu beckoned to an officer of his to say to him: "Go, find Sir Caray. Say Come to Sir Cobby. If he ask why, say you not know. If he talking to anybody, wait till he done. If he with the lady Sueela, she on our side, but if she ask where the Queen is, better say you not know. You not know anything yet."

And off the officer galloped.

XXI

SUEELA SPEEDS

BEYOND the river the officer discovered a servant of Macray who told him that Macray had ridden westward : and off for the hills he galloped.

The back of the ruin, whose front looked down on cliff, presently appearing on the night-sky, he cantered up a bush-path toward it, hearing before him a man singing—Macray, who on his sauntering horse was singing aloud, " We shall meet in the sweet by and by " ; and soon the messenger was saying to him : " Sir Caray, Sir Cobby say Come at once."

To which Macray, " in drink," answered : " What's it all about ? Not I. Let Mahomet come to the mountain, my boy. Tell him Sir Caray going to meet the sweetest lady in the land. Tell him——" But now at a bend Sueela appeared before him.

She started at the presence of another with him, and started afresh when she heard the known voice of a Dzinikulu officer say : " Oh, you better : Sir Cobby say Come quick."

" Sue," Macray remarked, " they want to drag me away—not likely ! "

" You come to see my mother, no ? " Sueela said, for reputation's sake, adding : " But, if Sir Cobby want you . . ."

" Let Sir Cobby hang himself."

" So where Sir Cobby is ? " Sueela now asked the messenger ; and when he answered : " Beyond the river," her heart started, her wits quickened, and, standing at the shoulder of Macray's horse, she asked : " And the Queen—where she now, Sintowe ? "

" Me not know," was the answer : " maybe chasing the enemy."

But "not know" and "maybe" rang untrue; and in a moment more Sueela cried out "Oh!" in a tone of pain, and fell.

"Why, what's wrong?" cried Macray.

"Oh! the horse stamp on my foot," Sueela mourned.

"Oh, my Sue!" rued Macray, dismounting, "damn the half a horse," and, as he bent over her, she whispered him quick: "Tell him to send Sanja to me."

On which Macray said to the messenger: "You gallop on up and tell her servant Sanja to come with a bandage," and, as the officer galloped off, Sueela eagerly said, "My foot not hurt, but me think maybe the Queen captured."

At once Macray was sober and alert. "You think that?"

"Eheh. How Sir Cobby come to send a Dzinikulu man? Maybe when Daisy fly, she follow with only a few men, and Dzinikulu take her—my mother say she in danger. You go with this man across the river, then try to find out where she is, and which way they taking her; then gallop back to me: me wait for you near the river."

"Right!"

"Now me go on up: you wait here for Sintowe. Maybe when he call Sanja, my mother hear, and, if she find me with you, she kill me."

At once she ran, then when the messenger reappeared, went limping, seeing with him, not only Sanja, but, to her horror, her mother coming, a tower trotting, a board of a box in her hand.

As they met, Sueela, braving the peril from her mother, mentioned to the messenger: "He down there waiting for you"; on which the messenger cantered on down, and in the same moment the board descended on her head.

She collapsed upon the path, and like one chopping wood with a measured process, Mandaganya steadily banged the bent head, with *humphs* of the bosom that

ever uttered "*white man*." Up the doctoress heaved, and, as down she brought the board, out of her bosom sounded "*white man*"; and up it went, and down came, with "*white man*"—like a mechanism acting, until at last the excellent girl's skull proved harder than the board, which split.

Such was the consolation which Mandaganya gave to an instep supposed to be crushed. . . .

But now it was Sueela's turn to strike; and, picking herself up with dry eyes, dryly she remarked: "You done? Well, listen to this: me think Spiciewegie-hotiu kidnapped"—making Mandaganya faint.

Meantime, Macray was cantering eastward, his wits on the *qui vive*, but seeming easy and careless; anon he hummed; anon offered drink from a flask to the officer; and, east of the river, asked: "What Sir Cobby want me for?"

"He going from Wo-Ngwanya," the other answered, seeing no reason to be secret now.

"I guessed as much," Macray said. "He has got the Queen, then, has he?"

"You soon see."

"I see already. Well, good job—I'm glad enough to be getting home. So how many men has Dzinikulu with him?"

"About seventy."

"All mounted?"

"Eheh: they officers."

"And which way are we going out of Wo-Ngwanya?"

"Along the foot-hills near the sea."

"Sea" was his last word on earth, he dropping shot by Macray's revolver, then his horse dropping; and Macray was racing back westward.

A little east of the river he met Sueela on her Mustapha speeding to meet him; and "They have her," he said: "seventy horses . . . taking her the sea way . . ."

Her hands met wringing on her rein. "Oh, Caray, you do what me tell you, no?" she pleaded—"me give you all—if they take her, me dead, dead, dead.

So you fly to Eshowe, no? The cavalry that she sent home—tell them to ride through the Lion's Pass: maybe you catch them up half-way to Eshowe. Show them this ring from me: say Spiciewegiehotiu gone, gone, say fly! You change horses at Bundhlwana's Kraal—come, me give you a guide"—and westward across the river they galloped together to the rifles, who alone of the fighting army were not out after the flying M'Niami; and, even while her stallion ran, Sueela was leaping down to a rifle-lieutenant named M'Pandiu, to pant at him her passion of tidings.

"But me have no orders—me daren't move," M'Pandiu in a torment of perplexity informed her, upon which, this M'Pandiu having been her lover in her twelfth year, she took him by the shoulders, half-kneeling, beseeching him: "Me good to you—me give you all—M'Pandiu—you *will*, no?—for me—" by which she achieved that within five minutes Macray was off, galloping westward with one of the riflemen as guide, and within ten she herself in the midst of a squad of fifteen riflemen—all who could get horses quickly—was galloping south-westward for the pass called Molimo's (God's) Pass.

Eastward, meantime, cantered the troop of seventy with Spiciewegiehotiu and her five, she on a horse not her own in the van with Dzinikulu, to escape the dust of the hoofs, for it was late September, final end of the dry season, and turbulent breezes from the sea turned the herd of hoof-beats into a whirl of dust which journeyed and journeyed; and with Spiciewegiehotiu and Dzinikulu ahead rode a little troop of officers, behind them Cobby on his Ali.

She had uttered no word to anyone, nor Cobby a word to her, in his nerves a shrinking of compunction for her, a prick of contrition. But, as on she travelled, the hilarity of the gale and of the flight overcame her grumness of pride, she threw away her helmet, taking the gale in her face and hair, and, touched with gaiety, occasionally made a good-tempered remark to Dzinikulu—always some comment on his conduct of the

coup. "Why you not do it yesterday when Daisy beat me, Prince ?" she demanded : "to-day when me victorious, and the people full of me, me think you run too much risk"—her intellect always preoccupied with strategy, with conduct, with the God's truth as to what one should best do to gain one's ends in any given group of events. And presently again she remarked : "Why you have all these men with you ? Me shouldn't have had half so many, if it had been me, or me should have had ten times more. They too many for some reasons, and too few for others." And presently again : "That man you sent to bring Sir Caray ought to have caught us up before this. Me think Caray kill him, and then tell Sueela me captured. *Why* you sent for Caray ? Me see six risks for you in that ! If Sueela know to-night, me think you fail."

"Sueela on my side !" cried out Dzinikulu.

At which she cast back her head, and laughed with the winds. "The trees pink, you think ?" she asked : "people who reckon wrong die young, Prince."

Some minutes afterwards the cavalcade stopped at a village called Masinka's Kraal, where some provisions and forage awaited it on sumpter-mules ; and soon was off anew through Daisy-territory, a granite country with reefs of quartz anon, and granite kopies, and frequent forests, and mountain on the right, a ride of gloom, until at two the moon rose, they now going south among hills of porphyritic granite, rich in copper, whence at one spot a sheet of sea appeared tossing in sleep under sheen of the moon, and Spiciewegiehotiu, peering at the scenery of it and the *Florida* on its rocks, drew up, and would not move on.

Presently after which the cavalcade was making westward over plain south of the mountains ; while away to the west Sueela and her fifteen were finishing the descent of the mountains through a chasm formed by a vast dyke of trap, whence, as dawn broke, they spied the southern gateway of the gorge ; and there,

sending out a scout, paused. Almost without food, the men shared with Sueela a bag of groundnuts which she had snatched, giving tree-leaves to their nags.

It was broad day when their scout came tearing back, chased up the foot-hills before the gorge by three riders ; upon which rifle-fire broke out of bush at the gorge's mouth, causing the three pursuing riders to bite the dust. But the news brought by the scout was already known—that Dzinikulu was on a kopie a league to the east and south, apparently waiting for something

" Waiting, maybe, for Sir Cobby's waggons from Eshowe," Sueela said.

Her plan now was (1) to strike terror, and (2) to gain time : so soon she had out an envoy, bearing a branch of embassy ; and he, a hundred yards from the kopie, where he was met by Dzinikulu, Cobby and some others, uttered his message : " The lady Sueela say Why the Prince carry off the Queen like this ? That was foolishness. The lady Sueela has 150 rifles with her, and Wo-Ngwanya rushing like a river to interview the prince. Let the prince send the Queen back quick, then the lady Sueela guarantee the safety of the rebels."

Here for Dzinikulu was set-back in business. He swept his palm down his beard, glancing back at the Queen, who was walking round and round the kopie's top, her hands behind her, eyeing the flight of the clouds.

" Sueela lie," he said : " she only have a few with her : we soon kill them."

But now Cobby spoke : he was not there to kill ; and there was dissension.

In the end the envoy was sent back with the *threat* that Sueela's handful would be killed.

And presently there came to the kopie another envoy with threats, and was sent back with threats ; and then another. Meanwhile the sun was mounting for Sueela toward noon.

And now arose dust-cloud in the west—cavalry sent

by Macray; and Spiciewegiehotiu, peering at it through her field-glass over one of the boulders that formed a parapet to the kopie, remarked to the Prince with her detached and disinterested interest in strategy: "It was too risky, Prince!"

And now on the kopie were speculative brows perplexed with crosses prospecting over the plain, and now bloodshed for Cobby, whether he liked it or not, life at stake for all, and woe to the conquered. Came and came the dust-cloud; out dashed Sueela and her handful, galloping, to meet it; and it was still forenoon when the kopie was within a ring of horses; spear, arrow and bullet going; man and beast feasting together on the taste of death.

The defenders, though they had some cover, were crowded together in comparison with the attackers, and, since on the kopie were but five firearms, of which Cobby's rifle was idle, the knot of kopie horses dropped fast: seeing which, Dzinikulu was for seating the Queen on a horse, and leading it round the kopie, so that the besiegers, fearing to pierce her, might leave off; but here again was veto from Cobby, and dissension.

"We all going to be killed!" exclaimed Dzinikulu in an epilepsy of debate: "you say no to everything!"

And Cobby, all blanched, answered, "She will refuse to be made a target, unless you bind her. . . . Would you bind her?"

"Yes! Why not?" cried Dzinikulu.

"Well, if anyone touches her, I fell him," said Cobby.

She, seated in leafage under cover of a rock at the kopie's circumference, could not hear what was said, but could see dissension, could see the slaughter going on among some of the horses, and the growing revolt of the others, and greyness of terror in every face.

During all which Cobby's waggons turned up westward, halting some hundreds of yards outside the circle of attackers, to be abandoned by the Dzinikulu men with them, who, on seeing how things were, at once fled.

Upon those waggons dwelt Cobby's glass : there was that within them which could compel and shatter Africa allied with Asia. . . .

But the attackers were much the more numerous, were closing in, throwing surer : and disarray ensued, some of the mob of kopie horses going dog-mad, rearing loose to scoot down the steep, and range the plain in a lunacy of mutiny and freedom ; in the midst of which Dzinikulu and two others in debate came to a decision without Cobby—to fly, taking Spiciewegie-hotiu, through Daisy-territory, to the kingdom of Sabingwe (Wo-Mashenya), who had for the Queen an evil will. To do her then and there to death they feared—feared Cobby's repeater, feared the frenzy of the people.

The Prince then trotted all breathless to Cobby to pant asthmatic : " The day lost ! We fly with her—to Sebingwe—he treat her well—from there you take her to your country."

Upon which Cobby, flying away to Speciewegie-hotiu with a wild white face, the Prince's rasping breast trotting ponderously after, panted at her : " We make a rush-through with you—We can force you to come, remember, by Heaven . . . Do you come ? "

She did not answer, did not see, him. To Dzini-kulu, looking up, she said : " Me come," and sprang from the ground.

And in some minutes she, with the Prince and two, and Cobby on his Ali, were clattering down the rock-side, a cataract of hoofs, whose impetus easily broke a road eastward through the streams of spears speeding to intercept, the presence of the Queen, whose rein the Prince himself held, acting as a shield to the fugitives on one side, the pursuers fearing to strike her ; and as all the fugitives were much better horsed, they had won well ahead of the foremost of the pursuers, when they became conscious of a solitary horse, stretched and staring, hunting them, Sueela's Mustapha, Sueela like a monkey on its mane.

She had raced from the west region of the ring of attackers, passing not far south of the kopie eastward, braving the rain of spear and arrow that the kopie spat out at her, she pleading to her animal's ear, and soon was within a stone's-throw of the fugitives; upon which Spiciewegiehotiu, having spied that she had a rifle, shouted aloud: "Stop, Prince, or you all get shot!"

At the same time one of the two blacks with Dzinikulu, who had a carbine, fired behind, but wide; and in the next second Sueela fired, not at the Prince, whom she flinched from injuring, but at his horse, which faltered, pitched, and knelt wrecked, pitching the Prince forward among thorns of mimosa bush.

His two blacks galloped on, and got away eastward, Cobby was off southward; but ere the Prince could pick himself up, he was a prisoner within a ring of spears, while the Queen and Sueela, on foot, on each other's bosom, were looking, not at each other, but dumbly away at the sheet of spears aimed at Cobby by his chasers. "Me go stop them," Sueela suddenly muttered, on which the Queen pushed her a little toward her Mustapha, and she was off.

But Cobby was well ahead of all, and well horsed. He, in a redness of resentment at fate and the black man, had started out to get at his waggons—instinctively, to be in his citadel; and after making a large detour southward, then westward, a wound in his right calf, he lighted from his Ali upon one of the waggons well in time to get his little Vicker's belted and pointed upon the on-coming mob of horsemen. Now he was lord of continents. He had thumbs on thumb-pieces to play them a piano-tune of quaver and semi-quaver, zip and zip-zip, but—did not; did not will to kill; and within three minutes stood a prisoner in the midst of a pretty furious troop of them.

Presently after which the kopie surrendered . . .

And near three in the afternoon the Queen, making northward through Molimo's Pass with her tail of prisoners, was met by half her army darting to her

rescue, bearing, too, the news that Daisy's great-place had been taken ; and when, in the gloaming, she approached her capital, she was like a mote floating on an Atlantic of humanity madly dancing, howling hozannas, all the town of Eshowe with her war-host now swarming like many waters sounding about her, she seated uplifted on a waggon in the seat of Cobby's monoplane, little dreaming that the thing might fly away with her ; and, riding beside her, Sueela, at whom she ever pointed, animated, laughing, as who should say : " *She* did it ! dance to *her !* " and on foot behind her, tired to death, tied together, Dzinikulu and Cobby.

XXII

SUEELA WASHED WHITE

FOR Dzinikulu now was solitude in his guarded hut, till, five days after the fiasco of the kidnapping, he began to undergo due trial in the *kotla*, or square, the Queen keeping out of it in her hut, not herself sitting a judge. But by *her* the judges had been chosen.

Day after day half the square was packed, hanging upon the witnesses, a wide swing-round of feeling in favour of the Prince having arisen and spread, a wild hope that he might survive. *He* was Wo-Ngwanya; Spiciewegiehotiu, after all, a novelty out of the sea and the clouds, a being full of lucks and glories, but not the rank old Africa of God.

Men said now that the Prince had been tempted and led astray by the white man. And the question was, why was this white man, who, though so strangely favoured, had shrunk from going forward against Daisy, and had almost caused the loss of the war, why was *he* not there on his trial with the Prince and the rest, but kept smuggled away in "The Elephant"? Was the Prince by chance to die, and not he, the cause of all? That would be Justice! This was a sore and jealous point with Wo-Ngwanya, and the name of Cobby, though it stank, was in every mouth.

Then a rumour flew—none knew its source—that Cobby was about to be banished, but not killed, lest the king of his country, who was known to rule over huge hosts in the blue of the sea, should bring trouble upon Wo-Ngwanya: and the sowing of this rumour produced some diminution in the tumult of tongues.

But when, in the fifth twilight of the trial, the Prince and many others were condemned to death, a dumb-

ness of awe and sorrow fell upon the populace, and a sense of resentment.

That night Dzinikulu in his hut attempted suicide ; but failed to die.

And this only enhanced the emotion of tragic pity and shrinking now associated with the Prince. Some of the wizards, braving the resentment of Mandaganya, now afresh insisted that his death would be unholy, passionately a filth, a shudder, and spat out the notion ; and to Spiciewegiehotiu came deputations—chieftain and headman from afar, General and Chief-of-the-tax, in twos, threes, tens : let her slay the rest, before all the white firebrand, but reprieve the Prince, last of the old Race. The first of these the Queen received quietly, heard silently ; with the third she flew into a passion ; the rest she heard with respect, weighing their words, without saying anything.

On the fourth day after his condemnation, at an hour when the dusks of sundown were already come, the death-drum sounded for Dzinikulu in the Square. Many people were then hoping for his reprieve ; few were present. He was carried in a cart, so that it might not be seen that he could not now stand without support ; and he was borne bodily to the block, moaning in pain, but quite composed to die. As his greying head fell, those present covered their faces, gave out a groan, and suddenly fled away in every direction to utter the story of his cutting off.

But he was no sooner dead than the rumour was being busily bruited that the Prince had been arm-in-arm with Daisy, and had meant to betray the army—a baseless rumour, doubtless ; and his death had been so timed, that on the very day following arrived the war-indemnity from Daisy, multitudes of cattle lowing in the *kotla*, crass souls spattering cataracts of droppings, with profligacies of slaughter, and free feeding. to render the populace gay and forgetful.

And in the following days they saw the beheadal of all the Prince's known confederates—a hecatomb of blood. No pleading could rescue, no plea prevail,

Fate not deafer than the ear of the Queen. "Only the white man survive," Wo-Ngwanya said.

He, meanwhile, lay dark—and sick: fever!—perhaps from the arrow-wound in his calf, or from that sightless air, or from his mind.

This time he was alone in his room—that he might the better reflect perhaps; this time had no electric hand-lamp; when he was delirious, within and without darkness reigned for him, and his home was in the realm of the old Anarch Chaos.

Always his warders asked him why he did not send a message to the Sinderngabya (Guardian of the Sad): but he would do nothing but suffer.

However, it became known outside that he was sick. Sueela one night heard it at her mother's, and flew home with the news.

Yet it was some time before, lying in a vine-arbour, looking out at moonlight, she uttered: "Cobby sick."

Spiciewegiehotiu did not answer.

And presently again Sueela, restively: "How long he got to be in that place?"

Spiciewegiehotiu glanced coldly aside at her. "Why you ask?"

"You only hurting yourself, my girl!" cried out Sueela.

"No, me pleasing myself. Me warned him! Now let him suffer, and think. When me hit me hurt. It is cruel to punish and not punish enough."

"So you keep him in that filthy hole whether he sick or well, Spiciewegiehotiu?"

"Yes. You sorry?"

"And if he die?"

Spiciewegiehotiu shrugged.

At which shrug Sueela started, shrinking, breathing "My God!" and again the Queen's glance dwelt with high eyebrows and icy eye-corners on her.

So the next day Sueela went to Mandaganya, and knelt saying: "Ma-Sueela, go to him! You go, no? Maybe you do him good."

Upon which the doctoress studied her under a puzzled frown. " Why you care like this ? "

" You think me not love him to my heart ? " the daughter frankly answered with a sob : " but not like another man—you not understand—Cobby a god—he very good, he very great—you hear how he cut off those three soldiers' legs, and they not know ! they not feel any pain ! and now they hop about. . . . You go, no ? "

And presently the mother said : " Eheh, me go, me go " : and the next day went.

To her no permission to visit was necessary : the doors flew open, the prison-men prostrating themselves before her presence ; and, sitting with her little dog by Cobby's bed, gorgeous reds of torchlight on her visage, she said to him : " You my enemy : you want to carry off my Queen ; but you sick, me come to see you, me bring you medicine."

Water sprang to Cobby's eyes ; he caught and kissed her hand.

" Why you not send a message to Spiciewegiehotiu?" the sybil asked, her hand on his forehead : " say Me burning with fever ; say Let me out."

He tossed for ease, moaning : " Never that—never that."

" Spiciewegiehotiu good-hearted," she told him : " but, if she let you out, everybody say : See ! Dzinikulu dead, but the white man free, and——"

" Is Dzinikulu dead ? "

" Eheh, he well dead ; no more Dzinikulu. They say you tempt him, but *he* tempt *you* : he *well* dead : me dance naked on his grave. . . . But tell me something me can do for you."

He clung to her hand. " Oh, some light—quinine—my medicine-chest——"

She asked, and he told her, how to discover the medicine-box, which two days later came to him ; nor after that was he ever long without the solace of the shine of a torch in his night ; and while Mandaganya was being rowed homeward through the gloom

under "The Elephant's" rock-roof she performed a spell with snake-bones for his benefit.

On reaching her home, where she found Sueela awaiting her, she reported that Cobby was truly ill: on which Sueela went back to the sigodhlo with a fixed lip, and in the deep night-time, seated naked on her bed with hugged knees, while the Queen paced the hut in a glum light, she ventured to break a silence with the statement: "Cobby very sick."

"How you know?" asked Spiciewegiehotiu, half-halting in her walking.

"My mother been to see him."

Spiciewegiehotiu span sharply to say: "What for? Tell Mandaganya mind her own business!"

"My goodness! he sick! You not care?"

"No! Me not care! Tell everybody mind their own business!"

"All right. But if a cow sick, they give it medicine. Sometimes of a morning ten or twelve people used to wait for him at the sigodhlo gate, and he give them medicine; but when he sick, in prison, nobody give him medicine. . . . Suppose he—die——"

"Let him die," said the Queen, with a vixen vindictiveness and fixity of lip.

Sueela cut a nod of menace. "Maybe he do; you better be careful!"

"Oh, he not going to die!"—Spiciewegiehotiu laughed a little.

"How you know? The Zulu, Panda, die there. Maybe he die, then—what? No more Cobby: the doves stop cooing, the winds stop blowing: you know you love him to your heart, Spiciewegiehotiu. And why you keep him there? Dzinikulu gone now: Cobby never again can attempt to take you away—he got no friends, no help. You say you always have reasons: so why you keep him there? You bring him out to-morrow, no?"

At which Spiciewegiehotiu flew into a passion, crying out: "Now, isn't this too much? Don't ask

me again!—never. You think me going to give *reasons?*"

"Me done," Sueela sullenly muttered, and shut up with resentment.

But the next day Cobby's medicine-chest was sought for; on the next he got it; close upon which followed fruit brought him by Macray, who stooped into the room, saying: "What, baas, in again, you jail-bird? How long you in for this stretch?"

At once Cobby wished to know how it was that Macray, when sent for after the kidnapping, had failed to join Dzinikulu and him! To which Macray answered: "Didn't know I was sent for—nobody came. If anyone had, I shouldn't have gone. No 'Elephantiasis' for me, baas, thanks. I warned that fool of a Dzinikulu that he'd get his head off sure, and I warned you. I think you might follow my advice a little, inkoos: I know my way about. . . . I hear you got wounded?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's all to the good—the whole incident. You now see definitely that you can't carry off the girl, and she sees that she had better send you away. We are to be 'banished,' as they say, though—why is the girl waiting? For you to get better, or what? I went to ask her, and she wouldn't see me—damn her I hate the white nigger like poison. She had better be quick, for my cigars are nearly done, and when they are, I start kicking, I make some sort of a bust-up somehow. I can't smoke this Wo-Ngwanya tobacco, and I'm not going to be done out of smoking for anybody. When I'm really hurt, I kick—I tell you frankly—I make a bust-up. So hurry up, baas! get well. Then we do a dart, you and I, and old Sue, and the waggons. Sue's mine now, you know, though she don't quite realize it yet. She and I plighted our troth in the canes one night——"

Cobby moaned, Macray's presence proving an added arrow in the quiverful of quinine-and-fever arrows whizzing here and there within his brain.

Great, however, is quinine; so that a week later he was on his legs, weak and wrecked, but pacing; and that day yet a visitor stooped for him into the room—a very young officer apparently, erect and gallant as a masquerade in cock's-tail and ox-tail and kaross of ocelot-pelt, carrying the long assegai and shield, whom Cobby did not recognize in that vague sheen of his torch.

"Well?" he asked when they were alone: "who——?"

She shrank aghast at his haggardness, breathing: "My goodness! you so sick?"

"Sueela?"

"Eheh. Why you not lying down? My God, you very sick."

"Only very weak now. You come to see me! Secretly?"

"Eheh. Me dead, if anybody know. Me can't help—— Oh, *why* you so sick?" Now her face muscles convulsed towards tears.

"You dear!" said Cobby, with water in his eyes: "come to see me? You dear!"

"You think me could help?"—in a hoarse tone in her throat, her face averted: "you think me not love you?"

Swaying with weakness, he went to take her hand, and gaze contemplatively down upon her, saying: "Sueela, do you love me?"

On which she was passionately on her knees to him, smoothing his hands down and down, her fingers stretched tense, saying: "Oh, me love you too much—only *me* know. . . . Me going to beg you to give me three kisses—not now—some time—me steal them from Spiciewegiehotiu—— You will, no?"

"Poor dear. Yes, yes, of course."

"You so good, so great. Only three—then all my life me not care what happen to me, me say 'he kiss me three times.' Not all the same day—one one day—then the next another day—then the last, last one another day. Spiciewegiehotiu not know: when me

dying—my mother say me born to die young—when me dying me tell Spiciewegiehotiu ' he kiss me three times,' and she forgive me. But before you kiss me, me tell you something—who me to tell it to but you ? me not good—me go somewhere with Caray, once, and with others before : me *shamed !* Now me done, done : that never happen to me any more. So you forgive me, no ? "

" Yes ! Yes ! " Cobby answered with nods, " till seventy times, dear," and lifting her up, kissed her cheek.

" That not one of the three ! " she cried out, pleased, all shy eye-corners, leering.

" No, no, that's not one," he consented.

Then she said : " Now me make you lie down, and give you sorrel-drink "—she had gourd and cup— " and me get you out of this stinking den this day ; if me not get you out, me tear myself to pieces "—an undertaking which, by an exhibition of no little cunning and skill, she fulfilled : for, on going from " The Elephant," and on changing into her girl's dress in the grounds of a girl friend, she hurried to Mandaganya, into whose presence she burst with a theatrical abandonment of despair, crying out : " Cobby dying ! "

" How you know ? " breathed the sybil.

Sueela poured out the falsehood that one of the warders had informed his daughter of it, and, " Oh, Ma-Sueela, quick ! " she pleaded : " you go to Spiciewegiehotiu, no ? Say He die ! Say The dog yowl ! Say Bring him out this day ! "

Meditatively the doctoress eyed her, remarking : " Me think you lying."

" Oh, Ma-Sueela, you stop to think ? " asked the excellent girl with reproach : " go ! go *now !* "—and before long the doctoress was off to do it.

Through which it happened that before sunset Cobby lay stretched in his lounge-chair in his old " guest-hut " in the sigodhlo, his old attendants about him. His enfeeblement being extreme, anon he dozed, and anon tore his eyes open to see the lights

flicker at wind, and listen awhile to raids of rain on the door, and doze anew ; until a little sound like an "*Oh !*" of shock roused him, and he saw Spiciewegie-hotiu within the doorway shrinking with astonishment and shock at the sight of him lying there so washed-out, so languid, exsanguined ; then she ran to him, and knelt with her arm round him, speechless, her cheek on his ; and when he felt the streaming of her tears that wet his cheek, he himself wept plenteously, and, without saying anything, they wept so together, till she got out on the sound of a sob in a broken voice : "So you get well, no ? now me near you. And now you do everything me tell you, no ? "

"Yes," he answered on a sob, "and you everything that I tell you."

XXIII

SUEELA CHANGING SIDES

NOW, the liberation of Cobby and his reinstatement in the sigodhlo astonished everybody: but upon Macray it had a profound effect, the bitter suspicion now visiting him that there must be something sweet between Cobby and the Queen: in which case—what? Cobby might yet get her to Europe! and all Macray's fat be in the fire. If Cobby did not get *her*, she would keep *Cobby*, and, with Cobby, Macray. But Macray's cigars were smoked—an important fact; and weary now in general of Wo-Ngwanya, especially since Sueela had "turned good," he was urgent to return to Europe.

Three evenings after Cobby's release he went to visit Cobby, to discover what was what, and come to some decision.

But outside Cobby's door he heard a murmur of voices in the hut, and, peeping at a seam between the door-boards, could see Cobby in candle-light on his lounge-chair, and, kneeling near Cobby, a young officer, whose posture of body and mind, whose face of affection, whose play of eye and hand, were hardly those of a young officer; and before long Macray was saying to himself: "Oh, it's *she*—the two beasts."

This scene had the effect of a profound upheaval in the soul of Macray: accustomed to be deified and preferred, to consider the sun and the earth his, he was churned in his depths to a turgidness of jealousy, a venom of enmity.

Not a word of the murmuring could he make out, but there he remained, smiling over a viper's-nest of emotions.

Sueela had started at a little sound of his step on the moss outside, had sharply breathed "What

that ? " and, though Cobby had heard nothing, she had continued to hearken, hushed, eyeing the silence, then had remarked : " Oh, it very dangerous ! Suppose—— ! "

" Better not come again, then," he said. " But I am glad you came, for I wanted to put to you this that I have been saying. Spiciewegiehotiu has afresh betrayed to me, not only that she will never go with me, but that she has no intention that *I* shall ever go, this talk of ' banishing ' me being mere talk for some reason of her own. So here am I condemned to life-long idleness and ripening. Of course, I can escape to-morrow : I can go through the air ; but then I should be leaving Macray behind, and that I mustn't do."

Sueela's expression was all perplexity. " How you mean—' go through the air ' ? "

" I can fly."

" Fly. . . . Up in the air ? Like a devil ? "

" Or like an angel. But whatever I do, whether I stay, or whether I go, I shall be in equal misery, if I go without Spiciewegiehotiu, who is half of me, and where she is not I am a fish out of water. And what I do not understand is that *you*, who love her so much, and love me, too, should be opposed to her going with me. I can only suppose that you don't conceive how much this would be for her good—— What are you staring at, black goose ? "

" How you mean ' fly ' ? Not up in the—air ? "

" Yes, I tell you. You must understand that animals with two legs, men and birds, are meant, not only to fly, but, sooner or later, to spend their life in the air, spurning the earth. And when I tell you that Europeans can already fly, and when you see how very far Africans are from doing any such thing, do you not see, too, that that is not true friendship to Spiciewegiehotiu to be on her side in her refusal to come to Europe, where, being opulent, she would enjoy far vaster powers and delights, and be like a lark let out of a cage ? "

She stared at him. " What you want me to do ? "

" Nothing, dear," he said : " only to be on my side in sympathy, so you should be, for her sake, and mine, too."

" My mother ! " she suddenly breathed, astare ; then shut her eyes, shook her face : " if she go, me dead, me done. Without Spiciewegiehotiu me a rotting dog on the ground."

" You would come, too," he muttered.

" Me ? "

" Why, yes."

Her mouth half-opened in a sort of laugh like one astonished with happiness ; but then, recovering herself, she shook her head, saying, " No, you not want me then. No. Me not go. Me stay and die."

" Perhaps I should not now go without you," he mentioned.

" No ? Oh, you good ! "—she drew her stretched fingers down his cheek ; and outside Macray hissed at her.

" But," she said presently, " why you not tell Spiciewegiehotiu that, if she go with you, she like a lark let out of a cage ? Maybe . . . "

" Haven't I told her ? " Cobby answered : " the girl's deafer than the deaf adder."

" She not realize. . . . Even me who believe everything you say—— Why you not show her the different things you can do, then, when she see for herself, maybe——"

This struck Cobby. " Well, there may be something in that. Yes, I will think of that."

She then, after gazing a little at his face in a stillness, stood up from her knees, saying : " Now me go. You soon get well, no ? "

He promised " Yes," with nods, looking up at her.

" If ever you want to see me, tell Sansiwana to whistle twice at noon at the back part of the park."

" Very good."

" So good health. Who love you ? "

" You. Think over what I've said."

"Eheh, me think." She pressed his hand in a vice. "Good health."

She still did not go, but stood averted, a pallor now under her skin; and then ventured upon the murmur in a tone of huff and offence: "Me have the first of the three kisses now, no?"

"Come, dear, come," he said, his face uplifted to her.

In a moment she was down to him, and, her palms holding his face, her lids closed, laid her lips on his brow, led them muttering down, found out his mouth with a pounce of passion bound back by chastity, and suddenly sprang and ran to the door to vanish.

Headlong she went, seeing nothing, though Macray had only a little withdrawn himself from the door; but soon she paused, stood a stone, hearing rather than seeing him pursuing her down the gross gloom under the meeting of the trees of the avenue.

He gripped her wrist. "Got you! You obscene little beast." His eyes blazed outrageous fire upon her; he deluged her in a fury of abuse. "You dugout, you gluttonous gutter, you ogling lewd goat! How many different men a day for you, eh? Your blackness is the blackness of sin, they say you were black with sin at seven, you deep-dyed——"

"What me done?" she asked pallid, yet with a quiet dignity.

He let go her wrist to box her staggering. "Think I didn't see? You filthy—— Come on, into the bush."

Again he gripped her wrist, and her face had a momentary horror of repulsion, till she quietly announced: "Me not going."

"Ah!—you dare. Resist one little bit, and tomorrow Spiciewegiehotiu hears all."

A heat of enmity, as of braziers dully smouldering, reddened the veins of her eyeballs. "Yes, you get me into trouble if you tell," she said, "but you never get anybody else: the same day Spiciewegiehotiu have you dead. She not have any fear of Cobby

carrying her off now Dzinikulu dead : so she not need you any longer."

" I see : I'll remember," he said to himself with a sinister meaning, adding : " Come on "—and dragged her stumbling.

" Where you taking me to ? " she asked.

" Up here "—at the entrance to an alley.

" No, not there," she said : " a hut up there—somebody come out and see. That other side."

Now she led his hold on her wrist obliquely across the avenue toward a spot where she was conscious that a tree-stump stood half-buried in the moss ; and since it was dark all there, his foot stumbled upon the stump ; and, as he stumbled, Sueela by a feat of nimbleness was running free.

After her he dashed in a passion of action—down the avenue, then a dart to the left round the royal park over noiseless moss under darkness of foliage, through which anon the moon threw moving pictures that winced and wandered. But though his legs were longer, Sueela's were fleeter, and she had left him well behind by the time she dashed to the park gate to gasp with wild eyes to the guard, " Me—Sueela "—she had snatched off her officer's headdress—" kill that wild beast—he chase me."

On which two of them went headlong, with spears held ready, to meet Macray, while he, seeing them, whipped out his pistol to lay them dead. But his angel whispered him of danger there : and since there was still time for flight, he fled, was soon in hiding in bush, spied them dash past him, and before long got to harbour in Cobby's hut.

Sueela, meantime, was modifying her dress in an empty hut within the royal grounds ; and, on going home, told Spiciewegiehotiu that Macray had met and chased her.

And Spiciewegiehotiu said : " So ? "

XXIV

COBBY'S "BANQUET"

SUEELA had no sooner left Cobby's hut, than Cobby, pondering upon her suggestion to *show* to Spiciewegiehotiu "the different things he could do," conceived the scheme of giving a big dinner, to exhibit to the Queen in what style she would dine at the Ritz and in the Riviera.

And when Macray, after being pursued by the two guardsmen, came in to him, Cobby asked what Macray thought of this concept.

"Splendid!" went Macray with an evil sneer: "but—I thought we were to be 'banished'?"

"No, it won't be done," Cobby answered.

"How do you know?"

Cobby shrugged. "Somehow."

"Then, let's do a bunk."

"We can't cross nine hundred miles of Africa without bag or baggage; and, if we have impedimenta, pursuit must mean capture."

"Why, though, should we be pursued?"

Again Cobby shrugged. "We should be."

On which Macray said to himself, "There *is* something sweet, then, between her and him"; and very irritably he demanded: "But when is this to end? Look here, *j'ai soupé*—or 'fed up,' you say in England—I'm fed up, I tell you frankly. I have nothing to smoke, man—I'm like a beggar that says 'can you give me a pipe of baccie, mister?'"

"Well, one must bear the inevitable," Cobby mentioned.

"Or blast it sky-high out of one's way," Macray muttered.

"No, not the inevitable," Cobby said: "you can damn it, but you can't blast it."

"No laughing matter to me!"

"Nor to me."

"Well, I'll think it all out," Macray said, strolling out.

And he proceeded to think in no good easy mood, but with his usual intolerance of obstacles to his wants.

"Thinking it out," he was lying the next forenoon within thicket up White River on an ant-heap where he had acquired the habit of hiding himself away, to lie in wait and eye the bathing of the Queen and her bevy, the ant-heap, as usual, being an even lusher jungle of fan-palms, mimosas, proteas white-flowering, than the wild round it. He was feeling a need to see Sueela, who, now that he hissed at her, the more teasingly allured him; and there, deeply concealed, he lay when the Queen's ladies appeared.

They ran, they prattled, they laughed, they splashed, they took the douche under the waterfalls; then were back, drying, dressing; then Sueela was climbing a marula-tree, with Spiciewegeihotiu underneath looking up, a marula some way from the troop of damsels, and hardly ten yards from the ant-heap.

Sueela picked and dropped peaches to Spiciewegiehotiu, then, seated on a low branch of the marula, chewing its peaches, spoke downward in a raised tone, continuing a previous conversation—about Macray. "You not need him any more. Why you bear with that man?"

Dreading the opening of Macray's mouth any day, dreading lest his violence should contrive to coerce her converted nerves into a sin against her nobler love, she did not now wish well to the continuance of his existence, and was bitter, too, against him for his hooligan usage of her. "He steal your father's picture, he use your father's goods, he hate you, he Cobby's enemy, he lead three girls astray, he want to lead me, he chase me—— Why you not cut him short? Me hate that man."

Spiciewegiehotiu shrugged. "If you like . . . maybe

. . . But look at those clouds scudding—the sky wide —water sweet, wind sweet—hear the river and the trees streaming—me like everybody to see and hear them, unless somebody's death do good to other people. Me have a score to settle with Caray, but there is something to his credit in it; maybe, but for him, Cobby and Dzinikulu——"

"He do it for his own good, not for yours!"—Sueela was leaping down.

"Me know. Well, maybe . . ." They were walking away: Macray lost the rest.

They left him there a devil, with a thought in him of Cobby's feast, and of how he might make a clean sweep then of all that impeded and hated him, to be off for civilization. He had not interfered with anybody, he said to himself—had been interfered with in his peaceable routine, first by that Master R. K. Rolls, who was well in hell, and then by that Master Cobby, and now by this black beast whom he had deigned to feel tender to, and this white nigger who so lightly doomed him to death for doing nothing. Or not for doing nothing? The theft of the photograph . . . she knew of that . . . knew the motive. . . . "All right," he said, "war it is: the quickest lives. *I* do the killing, I think: no one wounds me with impunity. . . ."

Three days later he received a summons to go to Cobby, *à propos* of the preparations for the feast, Cobby having already sent out cards of invitation to the elect—the bearer of the card telling what the card intended to say: for everything was to be in high style! and no little sensation and expectation was in the air at this event—a feast in "The Elephant"! one had never heard the like.

One there was who eyed the thing askance—Mandaganya; and she went to Spiciewegiehotiu to say: "What this 'feast' for? You go?"

"Eheh."

Mandaganya laid her hand on the Queen's. "Don't go."

"Oh, Ma-Sueela," pouted Sueela, who was there within the baobab, "this is too much!"

To which the doctoress quietly replied: "If you talk when me talking, me knock you down." And to Spiciewegiehotiu: "Don't go. Something bad going to happen. Me not hate Sir Cobby, but me dread him. He very wise; he make people sleep so deep, he cut off their leg, and they not know. Suppose he poison us all at the feast, or maybe carry you off asleep?"

Spiciewegiehotiu started!

"He not do that," Sueela remarked.

"Shut your box," the sybil answered; and, smoothing the Queen's hand: "Don't go. Listen, me tell you something: this morning me was picking herbs in the hills, and all at once this little dog run back to me with his tail between his legs. Me say to him: 'What the matter with you, Ronja?' He not make any answer, but when me say to him 'Come on,' he not come. '*Why* you not come?' me ask him. No answer. There he sit; twice me see a shiver twitch him. And all at once a rock come clattering down from the cliff upon the path ahead: if we had gone on, we get killed, maybe; then when the rock drop, he come on. So me think to myself: 'these must be days of danger, this month-end,' and when we get home, me show him the card Sir Cobby send when he send the invitation. Ronja look at the card, he not say anything for a minute, then he sniff at it, then he back from it, and snarl. Don't go."

The two girls sat rather ghast.

"You go?" asked Mandaganya.

"*Me* go," said Sueela.

"And me," said Spiciewegiehotiu.

"Then, me, too"—the sybil rose, a grand being, to go backwards out, grovelling to the ground.

XXV

THE ENTRÉE

ABOUT that same evening hour Macray, summoned, was in the sigodhlo, all in good-temper now outside, saying : " Well, baas, what about this precious banquet of Belshazzar ? Who's to be the *chef ?* "

Cobby answered : " You and I mainly. But the point is not the feast itself—these people here eat nicer things than rich Englishmen, and have those things much more lavishly than non-rich Englishmen —the point is the scientific accompaniments of the feast, the elegance and dignity which Science gives to life—the blaze of light—the music——"

" But stop—where this blaze of light coming from ? "

" Well, but, isn't there the oil-engine, the dynamo, and our forty accumulators ? Only I'm not sure how the rock holds nails !—we must drive in plugs of hardwood, I think. I'm having two arc-lamps in parallel, getting our six hundred watts from thirty accumulators, and the glow-lamps we'll rig in a series system with the dynamo and ten accumulators, using every watt of our power. The lamp-glasses are mostly coloured—I got them so with this very object, to dazzle in case of necessity : it will be useless if we do not look elfin and superhuman."

" I see, I see. Oh, we are being vain, baas of me ! we are out go capture the ladies' eyes. But why ' The Elephant '—— ? "

" Well, but," Cobby said, " we can't put the Ritz into a hut. That ' Elephant ' rock-hall a mile beyond the prison—that's the one I've selected : it has an alcove in which we can put our Primus and two stoves. The main bother is the table ! and a *chic* table-cloth—

and we have only ten days: must start making trestles——"

"And as to chairs?" Macray suggested.

"Oh, well, we must use stools."

"They don't have stools in the Ritz, isinduna—only footstools. These varnished stools here—when you get up off them they, too, get up a little, until they decide to part from you, and drop with a crash."

"We'll dry-dust ours."

"And plates of unglazed earthenware——"

"Oh, we have plates enough of our own—only eight guests."

"Not enough forks, though."

"Eat with fingers. It is only lately that the kings of England have forks: the Stuarts ate with their fingers."

Macray rose to stroll out, saying: "Oh, well, God's will be done, boys."

"Come early to-morrow!" Cobby called.

"Damn you," Macray muttered, stooping out through the hut-opening into darkness.

From the avenue he walked aside to the waggons to shed electric torch-light upon the medicine-chest, from which he took strychnine; and he had that day pressed out some milk-juice of euphorbia, a baleful bane, to mix with strychnine, in order to complicate and obscure the symptoms of both.

The next days were spent in pretty strenuous labour by him and Cobby and some blacks who aided them, for it was a long row or wade to the rock-hall, whichever way one approached it; and in the end the feast had to be put off three days.

On the last afternoon Cobby's home-coming was watched for at the sigodhlo gate, whence he was conducted into the Queen's hut, who, seated on the floor with Sueela, said to him: "They say you going to poison me, or put me to sleep."

"Do they?" says he: "but is this what you had to say? I am occupied!"

"Me been poisoned once," she said: "me not go: me 'fraid."

"As you please."

On which Sueela, shaking her head earnestly upward at him, said: "She not mean it, she not 'fraid."

"Yes, me 'fraid," repeated the Queen: "Mandaganya's little dog snarl at that card you send."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Oh, Spiciewegiehotiu," muttered Sueela with reproach in a pain of shamefacedness; and to Cobby: "She not mean it, me tell you! Go: you busy. We come to-night."

"May I go?" demanded Cobby.

"If you poison me, me haunt you," answered Spiciewegiehotiu.

"You haunt me now."

"Cousin Cobby. Red-head."

"Good-bye. Good-bye, Sueela. Start just at sunset." He was gone.

An hour later came from him to them garlands: and, garlanded, with Mandaganya and the Queen-dowager garlanded, and half a battalion of *gardes cavaleries*, they started out, cantering down a Square where, though it was raining, crowds had foregathered to gape and gaze.

Then at the "Elephant's" edge they found a punt all *en fête* with flowers, surmounted with an arch, out of whose leafage shot the sheen of three electric torches; this with the ladies in it was drawn forward by men wading; and, wading in the rear, stooping anon under the rock-roof, came the troop of soldiers, whom, with her usual prudence, Spiciewegiehotiu took with her.

But it was no short voyage under there in the dark, and Mandaganya muttered to the Queen-dowager: "Never in my life me go so far to get something to eat." If anyone spoke, it was in a mutter, for there was that in the mood of the place that disposed the soul to a musing in unison with that moodiness of the lagoon, which the waders' progress noiselessly wrinkled

in coils of ripples sluggish like oil-waves waving loth, only less loth than the areas of lotus, arum, mosses, whose old opium repose the roamers' motion anon broke or troubled ; and languidly the back gave way as beneath the weight of the leagues of incubus, and into the gaze came a dreaming ; until, after passing the region of the prison, they began to encounter anon a glow-lamp or two, hung from the rock-roof, gloating upon the water's gloom, mute warders, unaccountable, like outposts of gnomeland : and now they were roused to outlook.

Then an opening in the rock-roof lit up : and they made their way up a tunnel rugged under the glare of rare glow-lamps. Here the Queen posted her guard ; and the four ladies and the dog clambered on, till they got to a great rock-portal : and there at once an " Oh ! " of astonishment, of awe, broke from their breasts at a scene of majesty which would have abashed Cæsar—nay, Hume, Cuvier.

There at the portal stood Cobby and Macray, excellently dressed in jackets and cravats, to shake hands with bows of state ; and down under two triumphal arches gala with flowers and coloured glamours of glow-lamps, to the accompaniment of a most glorious music going on somewhere, they moved in a mood of Aladdin to a table gala with flowers and coloured glamours ; and flowers in showers, and festoons of coloured glamours, were looped all about the walls of the hall, and above, shimmering, showering a chattering as of ravishment, the richer flush of arc-lamps.

It was a night of lights and sights. Cobby, seeing the depth of the effect created, sat pleased at the right hand of the Queen, she seated at the table-head, her back to the alcove, behind the curtain of which could be heard the dynamo's murmur, the oil-engine noising. The only failure was conversation, all sat so lost in stillness and stiffness. When soup was being eaten, Spiciewegiehotiu whispered low to Sueela : " It good—but he not give much ! " and low Sueela

whispered back: "Me think more coming." And this was so: many mickles making a muckle, the liquors, too, being numerous, port, sherry, cherry-brandy, each in its season for a reason: at which warmth the ice thawed in time, and there was talk and lightness of mind, at the Queen's left being seated Sueela, Mandaganya, then on his own stool the dog Ronja, paw on table, feasting, then the Queen-dowager; and on the Queen's right the General, the Chief-of-the-tax, and two quite humble men, smiths, whom Cobby liked (and of one of them, named Rambya, had an even extremely high opinion), beside Cobby and Macray, one or other of whom anon sped away into the alcove to see to this or that.

In the midst of which Cobby extended his hand to a box on the table, and immediately all the genii of astonishment were called and flocked. Behold now: a disc on top of the box begins to spin, and—by the grace of God!—out of it sounds "Woman is Fickle" from Rigoletto. Then those there knew music more teeming with some mood and meaning of the spheres than the strains of canaries, as much more teeming as the smart and burden of the psalm which may one day burst from earth to star will be vaster than our sonatas. And—Oh, joy!—see now how they move to the news that the Soul of Being is bliss and emotion of gavotte, jig, jazz, finger wagging, hand clapping, head wagging, body going, He dancing, they dancing, sons of His soul, remembering how that same melody and meaning was inherent in the Nebula in the era when He and they reeled red, the little hound, too, with yowling mouth, snout up, hailing Him that moves and makes.

"It come out of that box!" Spiciewegiehotiu definitely discovered.

"Something inside the box!" sang out Sueela.

And this was so. . . .

After which yet another lunacy of astonishment ensued when, by just a touch of two switches, Cobby extinguished all that effulgence at once, causing all to

jump up, then summoned it afresh with a touch : and it came.

But this was just before an *entrée* of stewed koodoo-kid : and with that *entrée* the banquet came upon wreck.

The attendants placed the ten plates in their places on the table : but Macray was away in the alcove.

Now, Mandaganya had arranged with Spiciewegiehotiu, and with all the blacks, except the two smiths, that nothing was to be tasted until tasted by her Ronja and by her ; and at the *entrée* the little dog growled, and bristled, and would not taste : upon which the doctoress sprang upright, and, striking the table with her fist, glared close across into Cobby's face, crying aloud : " Me say this food poisoned ! "

White sprang Spiciewegiehotiu, staring at Cobby ; all went pale : only Cobby looked calm—glanced up to say to Mandaganya : " You might calm yourself : your statement is fantastic "—and went on eating.

A muteness of the tomb now : broken only by that chattering of the arc-lamps' flush, the armature's mutter and meditation spinning in the inner apartment. Cobby ate on, offended—no one else : for the smiths, who had commenced to eat, had ceased. And suddenly, after perhaps half a minute, Spiciewegiehotiu dashed Cobby's plate off the table.

" Now, how absurd ! " Cobby murmured, starting up.

At the same time the Queen on her feet said to a waiter : " Tell Sir Caray come to me."

But Macray was already outside the alcove, and in a moment was at her right hand beside Cobby.

" What you doing in there ? " she asked him.

Smiling, just touched with pallor, he answered : " Seeing to things."

" But your food getting cold." She indicated his plate. " Sit and eat."

Their eyes met and lingered a little together, until, with a chuckle, he said : " What, does the Great-

great want me to be poisoned ? I heard an outcry about poison. . . . You eaten any, baas ? "

Cobby nodded.

" Is it all right ? "

" Yes, of course."

" Then, what caused the outcry ? "

" The dog, apparently, didn't approve——"

" The dog ! Oh, I see. . . . Yes, that little beast, I know him—greatest charlatan and liar on earth—pretends he can see through a stone-wall. . . ."

" So you see," Spiciewegiehotiu now said, " it not poisoned. You sit and eat, no ? "

" Yes," said Macray, " let us all eat."

And again her eyes and his lingered together.

She said : " Me done ; me not want any more."

" Nor I, for that matter," he mentioned.

" No ? Oh, well. Go back to what you were doing."

On which, uttering a breath of laughter, he walked away back into the alcove, and she, as he vanished, took up a little goblet, threw some flowers out of it, put into it with a spoon all the stew that was on her plate, and placed it under the table.

There the feast, as a feast, came to an end : nothing that Cobby could say could induce to any more eating —he grieving at no sweets, no coffee, liqueur ; but cigarettes were smoked ; the *conversazione* went on ; telephone-sets had been installed at opposite ends of the hall, and all spoke in hushed tones to one another across all that stretch ; they sat amazed at a display of coloured flames, Roman candles, squibs, catherine-wheels, fickle crackers frisking ; and it was late when, laden with presents, the Queen went away, taking secretly with her beneath her kaross the goblet of *entrée*.

All in a dream of midsummer night their minds reeled, and " There is only Cobby," Spiciewegiehotiu muttered, moving homeward in the punt under the rock-roof. As when a young girl goes home dumb from her first opera, agaze at apocalypses of fairyland

through all the organs of her fancy, and all is trance of novelty, of freshness and strangeness, and in all her posture and prospect revolution ensues: so were they; or as when America was discovered, a "new world," and away in a whirl the imaginations of men went ranging in revels of reverie through realms of refreshment and festival, and a revolution ensued; or as when one dared to bore the aerial blue in a balloon, fairily rose and soared, ascending up into heaven, at last, in reality, the son of man before the beholding host of man, and all was renewed and broader and tall, and a revolution ensued; or as when one flew, and a revolution has ensued, and will soon ensue, behind every revolution a scientist, the breadth and boldness of some lone brow becrowned with thorns of thought: so with these moving bemused beneath that roof through dreamland. But by then the revealer of the dreamland, though he said nothing, was convulsed, in dreadful pain.

XXVI

SUEELA SCHEMES

THE sickness of Cobby and of one of the smiths (Rambya) could not be concealed. They were poisoned: but the diagnosis baffled Cobby, some of the symptoms being strychnine symptoms, some euphorbia symptoms, all obscurely mixed up.

To see the smith the Queen went a long way, and said to him: "Me know who poison you: you think me not avenge you?"

"Who poison me, Bayeté?" Rambya asked.

"Me not come to answer questions," she answered, "me come to see you. Now you soon get well, no? Good health!"

Meantime, she had put a bung into that little goblet of stew abstracted from the banquet, and had buried it in her grounds; meantime, too, the rumour of it flew wide: one or other of the white men had done this thing—maybe both, Cobby being taken in his own snare. . . .

And no vengeance taken! Sueela especially now expected the Queen to proceed immediately against Macray, but the Queen said, did, nothing: and the Queen now expected Sueela to be pressing afresh for proceedings against Macray, but Sueela said nothing—each for her own reasons. . . .

In the case of Spiciewegiehotiu, the banquet had afresh alarmed and put her on guard against Cobby, she scenting Cobby's object in going to so much trouble—to show her the glories of Europe, and allure her to trek that way. Cobby, then, was not done with thoughts of being off with her! And since, obviously now, Cobby had powers of which she knew nothing, and since Macray was one of her protections against Cobby, Macray was afresh precious to her.

In the case of Sueela, whom the majesties of the banquet had ranged quite definitely on the side of Cobby's desires as against the Queen's desires, she had conceived a scheme in which Macray would have to play a part, so did not at present desire Macray to die. Moreover, after the banquet, Cobby's statement had become more credible to her—that Cobby could go away "*through the air*," like a devil (or an angel), but never would go without Macray: so she now dreaded that, if Macray perished, Cobby any day might shake the dust of Wo-Ngwanya off his shoe, and vanish into heaven. This, indeed, would leave to her her Spiciewegiehotiu, her other soul; but this girl had now determined that Spiciewegiehotiu should *go* with Cobby, for Spiciewegiehotiu's sake, and for Cobby's sake.

"You not want me any more to 'cut Caray short'?" Spiciewegiehotiu at last asked her one day, with meditative eyes dwelling on her.

"Me 'fraaaid!" Sueela answered, very deceitfully, very deeply: "suppose Cobby still want to carry you off? Why he give that feast? Maybe Caray still useful. And me not think it was Caray who poisoned the food."

"No? Oh, you too foolish," the Queen said, and said no more.

By that time Sueela in a disguise had twice visited Cobby's lounge-chair, to mourn each time to him: "My God, you just get well, and now you so sick again."

"I will recover," he said; "and I bear it gladly, for now the Queen may be coming with me."

She shook her head. "No. Listen: the feast fail—it was my fault to tell you to give it: it only make her want you more to stay here. She say 'If *he* can make those things, *we* can make them when he show us the way; see if we not make Wo-Ngwanya the wonder of the world.'"

Thus the effect of the feast was the opposite of the effect intended by Cobby, Spiciewegiehotiu, like

Pharaoh at the miracles of Moses, hardening her heart at the miracles of Cobby; and with the rising of the sun upon that night of the fairies, fairyland lost its glamours for her, and got to be a matter for practical politics, her enlarged soul now starting to dream dreams of a new Wo-Ngwanya, far lordlier, introduced by Cobby; the mood of revolution took her: thoughts of war, of enormous dramas of transformation, of palms, campaigns, spectacles, splendours, Alexandrine transactions; and always she said to herself "war, girl, war, war." This was to work and work in her. . . .

"As the deaf adder stoppeth her ear," Cobby muttered. . . .

"She say she owe her life, she owe all, to the Wa-Ngwanya," Sueela told him: "so she give herself to them."

"And I owe my life and all to Europe: I give myself to it. If she will not come, *I* will die rather than remain here. I will constantly try to escape, I will hate her bitterly, I will kick and bite and fight till I die. Tell her: I couldn't speak to her yesterday, I was so ill. . . ."

"You ill still!"

"Yes: thank God that she or you got none of this bane that is in me into your blood. . . . How *did* it get into that stew? God knows!"

On an impulse she whispered: "Caray do it."

"No, come, come," he said peremptorily, "get that out of your head."

"He do it," she quietly insisted: "he want to kill me because me not go with him; he want to kill Spiciewegiehotiu and you because you keep him here; he not want to kill my mother and the others, but he so wicked, he not care——"

"Be quiet, Sueela, you are displeasing me."

She smoothed his hands, put her cheek on them, and shut up, for, though she knew how easily she could convince him that Macray was his enemy by merely revealing to him how Macray had originally warned

Spiciewegiehotiu of Cobby's expedition, she was apprehensive that if Cobby got to know of this, he might go off lonely " through the air," without Macray, without Spiciewegiehotiu. . . .

" Me not think Caray much a friend to you," she said presently : " so promise you not tell Caray what me come to say to you."

" Very good. What have you come to say ? "

Smoothing his hands, on her knees, she told it : he and Macray were to escape with a cart, she, Sueela, with them, and five fellows upon whose friendship for her she could rely ; then when they had gone a little way, the Queen was to hear that they were away, that Macray had carried off Sueela : in which case, it was certain that the Queen would fly in person to find Sueela, taking with her probably only a small body of men, since the fugitives would be but few ; and, as Sueela knew of a spot in a pass where a few in ambush might easily master many, there Cobby's lot could kill the Queen's men, seize the Queen, and be away with her, while Sueela went home to mourn. . . .

Cobby held his chin, speculating. " Needn't *kill* the Queen's men," he muttered, " . . . tear-gas . . . and capture. . . . Good, good."

" You think it good ? "

" Yes ! We will ! You—dear : both good and clever."

" But you look after me, no ? You not let Caray get me while me with him ? "

" Indeed not ! Be very sure of that."

" And you not let him know beforehand *why* we do it ? If you do, we fail !—he tell the Queen. Caray not want you to carry her off ! Me know, me tell you so, you believe me, no ? So you take away his guns from him when the Queen coming, no ? And you give me one of those little guns for myself. . . ."

She then went away, but the next time she came to him had each detail of the scheme completely planned ; and the following night met Macray by appointment in her mother's park.

Macray, at this time in an ice of anxiety for his life, apprehensive every day of what the Queen might mean toward him, and pining to be well out of Wo-Ngwanya, was torn betwixt delight and suspicion at what Sueela had to say: they were to escape! she with them, Sir Cobby to give her something to make the Queen sleep, and while the Queen slept, the cart and they would pass well away beyond capture.

"So who is it that you are running away with—Cobby or me?" he demanded.

Brazenly she smiled up into his face. "*With you.*"

"No lies! I *saw* you slobbering Cobby, you black Bacchant."

"But you not see me go into the canes with him? My goodness, me not give you proof who me love?"

This solaced, this mollified; but then he burst out: "Why, I heard you begging Spiciewegiehotiu up White River to murder me! I *heard* you!"

"You heard?"—her hand on his shoulder, she smiling up close into his eyes. "You were there?—to see me bathe, no? Me have the best figure of all those girls, no? But you not guess why me beg Spiciewegiehotiu to kill you? She so suspicious: she think me love you; and me want to make her think me hate you: so me say 'Kill him!'"

He pondered upon it. "Was that it? Really? But if you love me so much, why did you kiss Cobby?"

"But me love Sir Cobby, too: only different, not the same."

"I see. And why have you shunned me as you have?"

Her eye-corners ogled him. "Because you not to touch me again, until you make me your waaif in that country."

"Oh, Lord, I see—question of matrimony: what will the parson think? You're an unbeliever, my Sue. Never mind, I forgive you—come, kiss."

On which she drew a revolver from her moocha-girdle to present playfully at him, saying: "You see

this little gun ? Sir Cobby give me. If you touch me too soon, me shoooot you ! ''

But this did not deter, and when she saw him flush toward urgency, she took to her heels ; nor could he come near to catching her.

She had already explained to him what was his part in the plan of escape : *he* was to get the cart and oxen, keep them dark at his domicile, and stock the cart with guns and other requisites, got in very small lots from Cobby's waggons.

And this he did : daily entering the sigodhlo to get the things, and discuss with Cobby, whom he now found rather a cold baas, Sueela's statements about him having left some impression on Cobby : and it reached the ears of Spiciewegiehotiu that Sir Caray was often at this time in the sigodhlo—a bit of gossip that caused the Queen's eyebrows to rise a little.

And the Queen's eyebrows could not but rise a little at Sueela, who was sleeping unquietly, who was hanging to Spiciewegiehotiu's hand with a fresh anguish of friendship, gushings of love. One midnight, pretending to be asleep, she beheld Sueela seated abed, tossing her buried face, sobbing. And one noon she went seeking Sueela to the bottom of the royal park, having lately observed that after the return from the river-bath Sueela disappeared a little, and she wished to see what Sueela disappeared for. She could not see Sueela, who knew how to be invisible ; but at the far bottom of the park through a knob-hole of the stockade, she saw Cobby's back walking off : which thing also caused her eyebrows to rise a little.

XXVII

THE CAPTURE IN THE PASS

ONE dark evening a week afterwards Sueela departed from the sigodhlo to go to visit some friends at a farmer-kraal outside Eshowe, having told Spiciewegiehotiu that she would be back long before midnight.

She duly visited those friends, but remained there only a few minutes, then flew, met at an appointed spot Cobby, Macray, and her five friends with the cart, and started off with them through wild winds, drizzle and darkness for a pass five miles distant. . . .

It became midnight: anon Spiciewegiehotiu sprang up, glanced out at the rude night, and finally grew angry that Sueela did not appear. . . .

An hour later she wrapped up her head, ran out into the rain to a near hut, and sent out a messenger, who galloped to the farmer-kraal to ask after Sueela, and galloped back with the news that Sueela had soon left the kraal; on which the Queen wrung her hands together, and dispatched the galloper to Mandaganya to seek Sueela.

But before he was back, an agitated man was led into her presence to recount how, coming home in the night from a mountain kraal, he had encountered the white men in flight, with five and Sueela—Sueela tied, grieving, screaming, in the grip of Macray! They, seeing that he had seen them, had chased him, shot at him, but he had dodged and escaped!—this bringer of tidings being a sixth friend of Sueela left behind to bring the tidings.

The Queen listened to it in a white silence; whispered only: "Which pass?" and "Who are the five?" then let herself down on her bed, where she sat staring as if paralyzed; but then on a sudden flew

into a fury, sprang up, ran about, wished to tear out her hair, stamped at the messenger in a passion, screaming at him: "Fly out of my sight! Leave me!" then stood with her forehead on the hut-wall, quite passive some time, till she span to act. . . .

The morning light came bright and stormless. There where Cobby's party lay in ambush gadded gentle gales, gladsome like gas of champagne, to be quaffed by an organ more evolved and gladsome than the stomach; drops of dew—tropic dew—thronged all the bush with flushings of jewellery, drenching every movement made by jubilant green larks updarting, by canaries screaming greetings, and by the men who lay in greenery on a ledge twenty feet square, to which they had climbed twenty feet up an incline from a rock-corridor, very straight and very long, running through a realm of rock that climbed to the skies before them and behind them; and in a *spelonké*, or rock-hole, some distance off below them their oxen lay hid in thicket.

They breakfasted, then waited with agitated hearts. Only one of them had not known *why* they stopped there and waited!—Macray. But now he understood.

"Why do we stop?" he had asked at the stoppage.

Cobby had answered that there they would engage any pursuers with tear-gas, whereupon Macray, with a piercing eye of suspicion: "Pursuers! I didn't know that there were to be any pursuers."

"Well, but," Cobby had said with a smile, "the man who encountered us after we started has, of course, reported it; it must be that we are being pursued by horsemen: so it is useless to go on until we have defeated the pursuers, as we may here."

"Then why did you stop me from firing at the man who encountered us?"

"I don't want any killing, Macray."

"I see. Still, let's be pushing on—come. There aren't any pursuers, if Spiciewegiehotiu is under chloroform—as I understand. We have plenty of time to get well away, with our oxen fresh."

"Spiciewegiehotiu is not under chloroform," Cobby had then bluntly told him.

Macray's left eye had gone small. "Sueela lied, then?"

"It may be that Sueela does not invariably speak the truth——"

"No, especially when *you* put her to lie."

Upon which Cobby had fired a box into Macray's face.

Thus their friendly relation definitely ended. Macray, though he had snatched at his revolver, had not struck back, possessing, as ever, no little self-command: but he then afresh condemned Cobby to death, and the second death.

He could see now that he had been tricked; and, though himself a trickster, it envenomed him that others should be tricksters in respect of him.

Here, it was clear, was a trap to catch the Queen, Sueela being there, not in order to be with him, but, won by Cobby, in order to decoy the Queen to come. . . . He, however, quickly enough came to the decision that at the least danger of capture for the Queen he would kill in quick succession the seven with him, Cobby to begin, then Sueela. . . .

But against the success of that plan was the plan of Sueela, who also had a revolver, she intending to watch, and at any movement of Macray's hand toward his belt to lay him low. Moreover, after the breakfast, Cobby, in fulfilment of a promise made to Sueela, proceeded to disarm Macray, coming to where Macray sat apart on a rock to say: "I am sorry now that I struck you, Macray, though you were so very offensive. But you had better hand me over your revolver for the present."

"What's *that* for?"—Macray started upright.

"I have reasons—obscure, maybe—but——"

"You be——!"

Just in time Cobby had him covered. "Lift up your hands! Believe me, I shall not hesitate to shoot, if you are mutinous. . . ." He took revolver, knife, Winchester.

And afterwards Sueela, who had seen this through the thicket, came to Macray to stand before him with lowered lids, and say: "Me think the Queen will come."

"You do?" says Macray.

"Eheh. And me have something to tell you: me not want to kill you, but if you make any sort of noise before Spiciewegiehotiu and all her men pass this ledge, me stab you."

Bitterly impotent, he smiled upward at her, saying: "My Sue, my black-livered Sue! we may meet again."

The sun climbed up high, and then hid away his face with that fickleness of the days of the rainy season, breezes soughing now through rough seas of trees, bringing drizzles, breathing that delicious bleakness and chill of November reveries and memories. It was noon before Cobby, lying at the edge of the ledge, spy-glass at eye, spied a figure coming, pigmily remote, alone, on the road below. His heart started, ceased to beat, and, white with excitement, he breathed to Sueela: "She comes."

A shivering seized Sueela. She whispered: "How many men?"

"I see none. . . .

"My God!" she breathed. Somehow this terrified her!

On plodded the solitary figure, and suddenly Cobby's forehead rushed red, he sending out at her the shout: "*Cœur de Lion!*"

"*Sh-h-h*"—from Sueela in an anguish of secrecy, although the figure was evidently still too distant to catch any shout.

But presently all saw her, and every breast there quailed at her coming more than if she had come accompanied by squadrons of cavalry: some majesty of self-assurance, some spell of proper authority, was suggested in that steady stepping, that did not pause and palter like common steps—and some menace: for to their nerves she came, not as a bird to the snare,

but as a judge. Cobby himself felt it, and the flush of his shout at her rapidly perishing out of his face, left it blanched; the five black men lay visibly affrighted; and Sueela, wringing her hands, lamented to Cobby: "Oh, you not get her! You not get her! We all ruined!"

"Nonsense!" answered Cobby, turning irritated upon her: "why not get her? She comes alone!"

"Why you think she come alone—on foot? She not looking for us—she know we here! That why she not bring any men, she not want them to be killed, she come alone to capture us! Maybe she guess all, all. . . ."

"Well, suppose so—what then? She is powerless! When she comes I simply take her."

"Oh, you not take her!" she cried in an ecstasy of distress with a cry-cry face: "you think she come like that, and not have some plan? Oh, tie my hands together quick!"

At the same time Macray, lying on his face some feet away, called to Cobby: "Now you think you have her safe, don't you? But I'll bet you haven't."

Cobby turned sharply upon him. "Don't you *want* me to have her? That is why we are in Wo-Ngwanya!"

"Not a question of what I want," answered Macray: "I only remark that you haven't got her yet, and probably won't, not if I know the girl. If you do get her now, she'll be back in her pig-sty within two days. . . ."

And on the solitary figure plodded, showing already her stretch of shin, then showing the rhythm of her hips' motion and wilful shoulders swinging, like some trained pacer's of "the films," then the raising of her face in friendship to the spray of a rain fresh as the winds, and as the wild fresh thicket, and the wild fresh breath of the spirit of Being, then showing how the puffs of the wind kept fluttering the flimsy stuff, saffron and black, of her kaross, and showing at last with how grave and estranged a face she came.

To gas, or not to gas, her foreground : this was Cobby's problem. He shrank . . . !

When she was opposite the ambush, her pace a little slackened—involuntarily perhaps ; but she did not look upward, walked on beyond : and now Cobby, springing to his feet, gave a signal, and all, save Sueela, streamed down upon her.

As she span to face them, Cobby, who was very agitated, ran up to her with the announcement : " Now, you see, I have you."

She seemed not to see, to hear, him, but, eyeing the five blacks, said quietly to them : " You touch me, no ? " and drew a knife from her moocha-band to hold at her bosom, to penetrate : and it was with wide eyes that they beheld a thread of red astray on her left breast. . . .

And in one moment now was revulsion and revolution of emotion : to ten eyes welled ten waters—all young men with warm minds. " Bayeté ! No ! " broke in protest out of one mouth ; one knelt with wrung palms ; all put out their arms in shame-faced reproach to her, while from the ledge broke a shriek—Sueela's—who in a moment more was flying, tied, down the incline, wild of eye, toward that knife.

" So you not want me to die ? "

" *Bayeté !* " one protested with parallel arms extended tense.

" Kneel down, then."

" Nonsense ! Don't be tricked ! " Cobby cried out. " You are *my* men ! "

Down, with brows bent to the ground, they knelt.

" Say after me : ' Bayeté.' "

" Bayeté ! "

" ' Our Mother.' "

" Our Mother."

" ' Live for your sons.' "

" Live for your sons."

" Very well : me will. Now get up. Me pardon Sir Caray. Arrest Sir Cobby."

Upon which Cobby, who had no appetite for any

more "Elephant," and had tear-gas (non-poisonous) with him, darted into a run to get far enough off to cast a bomb and gas the lot of them, in order to be gone with her from Africa : but after him the blacks darted so sharply, that he had hardly any start : to gas them would have been to gas himself ; and the thought that if he cast a bomb toward her in that spot, running the risk of slightly wounding her, he might gas the oxen also caused him to falter ; and, as he faltered, he was caught. The men then besought him : "You may as well—she too much for us—we not get her"—and he walked back to her in the midst of them.

Having now unbound Sueela's hands, she tossed the cord to the blacks to bind Cobby's, an operation which Cobby permitted with a bitter smile of disdain, in which was some self-disdain, for, if he had gassed her from the ledge, and not shrunk and trusted to luck, the result might have been quite different ; and to himself he said : "A fool is a man who is wise too late."

Meantime, Macray, all asmile, was saying to the Queen : "Thanks for 'pardoning' me, Bayeté : but there is nothing to pardon. I was going off to my country, as I have a right to do, but I had no notion that a trap was being laid for your Majesty by Sir Cobby and that young woman, who wasn't being carried off by *me*, but came voluntarily with——"

"Tell her all your lies !" Sueela cried with a grin, glancing round from dabbing with a cloth the wound in the Queen's breast : "she not believe !"

"Came voluntarily with Sir Cobby," Macray continued quickly, "in order to decoy you into the trap. She kisses Sir Cobby. Her wrists have only just been tied to deceive you——"

"Ha, ha, she not believe !" cried Sueela in triumph : "tell some more !" And to Spiciewegiehotiu : "This man hate me like poison because me not go with him ; he hate us all, he want to poison you."

"You lie," Macray remarked.

"What!" cried the Queen with a flush: "you speak to Sueela like that in my presence?"

"Well, if it pleases you to be deceived, be deceived," Macray nonchalantly said.

On which Spiciewegiehotiu's eyebrows lifted, and she said to Sueela: "But—why you not call out to warn me before me come? Somebody had his hand over your mouth, no?"

"Yes, of course"—from Sueela.

Macray chuckled. "Yes, you chief of sinners—'of course.'"

The Queen looked from one to the other of them, thinking her thoughts, then decided to say to Macray: "But this is strange that you speak to Sueela like this. Me not like it, Sir Caray." This she said finishingly; and to the blacks: "Now the cart."

On which the cart, ready inspanned, was brought from the *spelonké*, and they presently set off northward, the Queen, who was weary being wedged uneasily among packages in the cart, Sueela trudging beside it, and, trudging in front among the blacks, Macray and a Cobby all an inflammation of rage and rancour.

XXVIII

SUEELA MARRIED

THE going was slow—steep for the feet of oxen ; anon an off-wheel was on the brink of abyss ; and the Queen was so uneasily seated in the cart, that before long she chose rather to trudge afoot. And presently Sueela, without looking at her, ventured upon saying : " You let his hands free, no ? That hurt him. . . ."

Spiciewegiehotiu's eyes dwelt a little on her before the reply came : " Yes, go tell them " ; and Sueela sped forward with the order.

Thus, with Cobby freed, they trekked that intricacy of rock-scenery until near sunset, when all were weary, and Sueela exclaimed : " My goodness, when we going to get something to eat ? "

" We nearly reach Hyena Kranz now," Spiciewegiehotiu answered, " and there we sleep till the moon come up "— this kranz being a mug of crag some hundreds of yards across, sky-high all round, its bottom rising toward the right, and thick with timber, save at the left (west), where there was some bottom all rock in front of a cave : and there a fire was lighted, meat, meal taken out of the cart, poospoos cooked, and a supper consumed that had no lack of music, for yonder to the north a cascade come darkling down the crag, like yard after yard of gauze and lawn measured off recklessly in a frenzy for customers without money, the two girls supping with a certain aloofness in the cave's mouth, the men in a crowd round the fire under a dark sky ardent with stars—stars large like those sparks which parted from the flame to dart away whither the wind ranged, and strange like that aged charm of the cascade, like the cadences of that darksome psalmody of the winds within the palms.

Only these sounds, and the fire-wood spluttering: till all the men started at another sound—like a neigh.

"Where it come from?" they asked one another, and sat hearkening; but now could hear nothing but the breeze, the bruit of the waterfall, and the brawling of the brook that the waterfall caused. One sprang upright, saying: "We go see," but Spiciewegiehotiu called from the cave-entrance: "Maybe it was a zebra: eat your food—don't trouble"; and again all was noiseless, save the voices of the night's silence.

Then after food they smoked, some taking small pipes out of holes in the lobes of their ears, and then disposed themselves to sleep, the cavern having two halls, both large, with a doorway between, in the inner of which the Queen and Sueela lay little and lost in rock on their karosses, and the others lay in the outer.

But Sueela could not sleep, because her head was heated and teeming with the day's event, and because a hyena continued to laugh heartily somewhere in the kingdom and mood of the dark, and because water was dripping somewhere from the roof into a pool, and, drop by drop, haunted all the hall with a succession of echoes.

Now, the fire outside the cave's mouth had been made bright to scare away wild beasts, and so Sueela after an hour, through the portal, saw Cobby go out soft toward the cart, saw him come back, bringing something, did not see him lie down again. . . .

At this thing her heart thumped thickly. What could he be doing darkly in there in the dying half-light of the fire? She sat up to peer—could not see! could hear the men's breathing—everyone seemed asleep but Cobby. And she wrung her hands, anxious, in trouble for him: for though the Queen breathed as in sleep, it was uneasy sleep. . . .

So, after a long hour of it, Sueela levered herself soft, soft, to her feet, to go to him—to warn, to comfort, to kneel to him.

But as she stepped away in haste, her foot touched, upset, a jar of water . . . on which back she scuttled to lie down anew, for the sound had seemed to trouble the Queen's breathing. Only for some moments, however : and soon she was up once more, and out, her heart in her mouth. . . .

She found Cobby so bent over one of the blacks, that she had to touch him before he saw her ; and now she put her lips into his ear to hint the meaning : " *Come with me.*"

He whispered : " *Wait.*"

After two minutes he stood up ; went with her out of the cave.

And active and tactical as cat with rat the Queen was tracking their feet.

She saw them go past the glowing embers, cross a patch of long grass and mimosa shrub, and go into timber ; and like a boa boring after a bird she bored her journey through the bush, ferreting after them in flames : the bush burned and was not consumed.

They stopped within a knot of fan-palms, and she could see : there was starlight, which gives one-fifth of the light of the moon, and there was some off-shine from the embers : but nothing could she hear of what was said ! for a brook rolled near in her hearing, and they spoke very low.

Sueela's hand was on Cobby's shoulder, her face close up to his—she wished to know *what* he had been doing. . . .

" Making them all unconscious," he told her : " it took a long time, I had to do it so gradually, to evade any outcry ; but that one you found me over was the last : now I am going to do it to her."

" Oh, my," breathed Sueela.

" Don't be frightened : it will be late to-morrow before they are on their legs again—I am now quite her master, and shall show her."

But she clung to him, with " Oh, me 'fraid ! me 'fraid ! Better not—listen to me—You know a lot, but a man no good against her, she so artful : only some

other girl could match her . . . why you not leave it to me ? Maybe later on me think out some way ; but me 'fraid—You make Caray unconscious, too ? "

Cobby sullenly answered : " Yes, I decided . . . Macray's behaviour has been so strange and reprehensible—he must make his way home without me, I without him——"

" But still—Oh, God, me 'fraaaid—Spiciewegiehotiu do *some*thing—she not go with you—not far—she run away while you asleep, she come back, she send horses to where she left you, she drag you back, she dog-rabid when she angry—maybe she cut off your head : if she cut it off, me drop stiff dead "—she drooped, kneeling, to his palm, of which she made a cushion for her cheek.

" No fear of that, dear "—he raised her up—" we shall be well away before we sleep ; and while I sleep, you will watch her."

She started ! " Me going, too ? " in a hoarse throat-tone.

" Why, yes—Sueela—of course."

She tossed her shut eyes about with " Oh, don't *tempt* me !—you not want me ! "

" Yes, yes," he said : " of course, you come. She will not be happy without you, nor—will I."

At that " I " her arms were wrapped round him, and in a transport her mouth found his—for a moment only : in the next her face was buried in her elbow, and a sob brought forth : " Oh, what a wild beast ! Me never meant to do that. But that the second of the three, no ? "

" Very good," he consented, " since you wish it so ; and one more is left. Now we go—come."

But she shrank. " No, me not go ! me 'fraid . . . Oh, you not hurt her, no ? "

" No, no—no pain : come."

" No, me wait here : when you make her unconscious, come tell me."

" Very good "—he moved to go, and Spiciewegiehotiu was off, private as the night-beast stealing, but

fleet, leaping the bush with high wide strides, bounding, but soundless. Cobby did not see nor hear her at all; and when in the inner rock-hall he bent over her sleeping-place, there she lay breathing as in sleep.

But in the outer hall she had smelled an odour—of chloroform—which she had smelled months before (in her hut on the night of Cobby's arrival), and knew to be narcotic, for Macray had foretold her of it: and now when she smelled it a foot from her nose, she felt no inclination to inhale it instead of the heavenly air; so, startling Cobby's heart, sudden and straight she sprang, asking composedly enough: "What you want, Cobby?"

He, in a revulsion of emotion from his shock and astonishment, had her snatched to his heart, ravenously devouring her mouth, panting at her: "You I want."

And passively she took it; but, as soon as she could, still on his bosom, lifted up her voice: "Come! kill this man!"

"No, they won't come," he breathlessly uttered—"all drugged. Now I am your king. Will you do now everything that I tell you? Do you love me, your cousin, your king?"

"Hate you! King? Slave! So you drug them all, no? This is the thanks I get for letting your hands free, no? And you seize my body, you dare to kiss me, without my consent? For this by itself me sentence you to ten days in 'The Elephant.'"

"Oh, nonsense," he said, holding her close: "in ten days you and I will be far enough from 'The Elephant.'"

"Kiss me again," she whispered witchingly: on which, fitting her to him, he kissed her continuously; but the instant he stopped, "For that," she said, "me sentence you to twenty days in 'The Elephant.' Now do it again."

"Oh, no more," he panted, "my heart will break on that breast of yours—Spicie—Cousin—Soul—secret of God revealed to me—essence of Heaven—Come—no

time—— Do you come, or do I drug you by force ? I should like to smother up your mouth, and break you to my will."

She disengaged herself from him, saying : " Me come."

" Come, then, come "—and, she following, he walked busily out, with some wonderment in him, though occupied with other things, that she did or said nothing as to Sueela—through the outer room, where she kicked one of the blacks to see if that would rouse him, and then remarked dryly to Cobby : " You think me silly, no ? You think me not foresee that you might do this ? "

Cobby said nothing till they were at the cave-mouth, when he said : " Now to get the oxen together ; " on which with one hand she seized his sleeve, and, putting with the other hand to her lips a small horn hung on her hip below her tunic, blew a tooting.

The moon had just mounted up, cumbered in a jubilee of clouds and colours, transmuting the mood of the night as mightily as that tooting transmuted the mood of the wood, which was suddenly arustle with troops rushing : for Spiciewegiehotiu had not gone out solitary from Eshowe, though she had gone on solitary from this spot, in order to safeguard her men from the disadvantages of an ambush ; now they came pelting, a stream of tails and feathers, to make hasty prostrations at the Queen's feet ; and, lost in astonishment, Cobby pretty soon stood a prisoner at a signal of her finger. . . .

In the same moments came Sueela rushing, speechless, staring terrors ; but immediately felt better when the Queen said : " There you are. . . . Couldn't sleep, no ? Went out into the air, no ? "

" Eheh "—her eyes dwelling, dwelling, on the Queen's face.

And Spiciewegiehotiu remarked : " The moon up : we go on."

" Fall in ! " an officer now called out, and the troop drew up in two ranks on the rock-ground between the

grass and the grotto, by which time Cobby had been dragged to be tied to the cart, he calling to the Queen : " You shall kneel to me ! "

She waved her hand at him, calling with banter : " Some other day ! " then at once turned to tell the officer about the six drugged, bidding him kick them awake ; and when he had tried in vain, she said to him : " They all traitors, except the white one : so leave ten of your men with food to arrest them when they wake. Now the horses and the oxen."

All on horses, except four with the oxen and with Cobby, they now set off, the Queen and Sueela on their Selim and Mustapha : but the farther they travelled, the deeper into her feet sank Sueela's heart for affright at the Queen's silence. If she said anything, Spiciewegeihotiu answered short, and when morning dawned upon them she understood that that was doomsday dawning.

As they were now only a few miles from the town, a rumour of them flew, people streamed to view them, and Cobby had to endure no lack of scowls and frowns, prophecies of ill-fortune, one old woman pulling his ear to say : " Now she cut you short, my man " ; even one of his smith-friends gave ungracious glances at his misery and ignominy and haggard aspect, though the smith, Ramoya, boldly grasped his hand.

From the great gate of Eshowe they led him away westward to " The Elephant," followed by that glowering ogle of Sueela's grief, upon whom, too, the sword of doom was about to drop : for when, some way up the great square, they were come to the point nearest to Mandaganya's domicile, the Queen, languidly waving to the throng, said to Sueela : " Now go to your mother, Sueela. Later you hear from me. You not to send me any messages."

Like lead fell Sueela's head, her fingers stiffened, her lips gaped, her stare gazed into the depths of hell ; and, saying not a word, she turned her horse's head, to walk it as woefully slow away as after the dirges and hearse of Hope.

Thenceforth another than Sueela slept in a hut with a Queen who did not sleep, who, of all the bereaved and solitary, was the deepest bereaved and lost in solitude.

Three days later three ambassadors of Wo-Ngwanya, sent to M'Niami, stood before King Daisy in the kotla of his great-place amid a crowd of councillors ; and Daisy said to them : " Now say your say : me listen."

Upon which one lifted up his voice and said : " Spiciewegiehotiu say to Daisy She want to strengthen the friendship at present reigning between her and Daisy : so she proffer afresh the hand of the lady Sueela in marriage to Daisy."

Now, the good Daisy had " had some," as people say, in respect of marriage with Sueela, and was not taking any more without due circumspection and care in stepping. . . . His heart started at that message ! This Sueela had cost him much in kine, and fears in the watches of the night ! But for that snatching off of Spiciewegiehotiu by Prince Dzinikulu in the hour of her victory, there might now have been no more Daisy, hardly any more the name of M'Niami. So, having banqueted the ambassadors and given them gifts, he sent them back with thanks to the Queen, and with the message that in a week he would despatch an answer. . . .

Daisy was at present inclined to elderliness, and a man likely to be speedily subordinated and sat upon by Sueela, if he had the misfortune to marry her—a rather weak, rather ridiculous negro, who regarded himself as specially the *protégé* of God, or ghosts, or something, and " me protected " he ever said with half a laugh, " something protect me ! " If there was an epidemic, or an accident, and he escaped, he'd exclaim : " Me preserved ! something preserve me "—a truth certainly, but the absurd person never observed that it was true, too, of many men, and deer, and pompions, and potted meats—a tall man, a little knock-kneed, with a straggling beard, a tooth which projected a little upon the lower lip, coloured eye-

whites—not very pretty. But, though so protected, he was wary : and, instead of sending an embassy, himself journeyed to Eshowe, to converse with Spiciewegiehotiu.

There he was well fêted, and quickly convinced himself that Spiciewegiehotiu's object this time was really bridals, and not war. " While you and Sueela live, we friends," she said, clasping his hand : " When you or she die, me add M'Niami to Wo-Ngwanya."

Then, with a retinue, he went to see Sueela at Mandaganya's, and back in high spirits hastened to Spiciewegiehotiu, who said to him : " You like her, no ? "

" Eheh—she good—she a heifer—oh yes. Sullen, still, yes ; but she soon love me. Better take the three thousand for her."

" No, only the two. . . . So, Daisy, you not 'fraid she scratch out your eyes ? "

" Poh, no : she not do that. . . . Me protected ! Something protect me."

" So she go to you ; you get her, Daisy. But you always treat her well, no ? "—her voice broke, she turned from him with lips that quivered and worked.

The same evening came the doctoress-mother suppliant, and fondled the Queen's hands, saying : " Sueela say Spare her."

On which Spiciewegiehotiu flushed. " Me told her not to send me any messages."

" No, she not send ! me come myself," the sybil said hastily : " but she say She not want to marry, she only want you in this world."

Up sprang Spiciewegiehotiu, angry, to pace. " Spare her ? Spare her ? Me marry her to a King ! She and you not proud ? "

" Yes, me proud ! me thank you !—my goodness. But she sick—she got so thin—she not want to go so far from you—she say She rather marry a slave where she could see your foot pass sometimes—oh, how could you turn her—— She done something very bad, no ? "

Spiciewegiehotiu's head hung down, her gaze on the

ground, full of a lugubrious brooding, and she muttered : " No, she not done any bad ; it's me, it's me : me have a bitter heart."

" But you not bitter for nothing," the sybil said : " me know very well she done something : me think you catch her with a man—no ? Tell Mandaganya ; tell Ma-Sueela."

But the Queen, at present very fickle in temper, said fretfully : " Oh, me tell you no—— Go away ! Me not want to see anybody."

Hence when, after Mandaganya had gone, Macray sent in a pressing request to see the Queen, she said to the messenger : " Tell him no : ask what he want."

Whereupon Macray sent in the second message : Why marry Sueela to Daisy ? He himself was ready to marry her instead : was the Queen willing ?

" Tell him yes," answered Spiciewegiehotiu : " tell him bring the two thousand cattle for her into the kotla " : at which the messenger grinned, and Macray grumbled : " the bitch ! "

The next afternoon Daisy departed for M'Niami, to make ready for the week of wedding-feast and ceremony ; and four forenoons afterwards Spiciewegiehotiu, after her bath, left her bevy of attendants, and worked her way with furtiveness, eyeings and lurkings, to climb a mound covered with mimosa, whence to descry the road out of the town. There she waited until cavalry cantering appeared, within which was Sueela ; and " let her go," she glumy muttered ; but when the dust of it was no more visible, suddenly her countenance convulsed, and but that she stuffed up her mouth with a towel and bit into it, bitterly she would doubtless have howled aloud. . . .

> Alle das Neigen
> Von Herzen zu Herzen,
> Ach ! wie so eigen
> Schaffet das Schmerzen !

Thus, anyway, with wailing, went the excellent Sueela away, to be lain with by the likes of Daisy, though to sit on him. . . .

XXIX

SEBINGWE

COBBY, meanwhile, tholing the glooms of "The Elephant" in his old room, got during two weeks no news of the external world, but then heard from the Collector of Messages, firstly, that Sueela was wedded, and then heard, what to him was like a burn, that the five men-friends of Sueela whom she had tempted to venture to trek with her and him, who then had forsaken her and him to kneel and plead with the Queen to continue to live, were now about to be executed for treason. Treason they had no doubt committed: but still he was wrung with compunction for them. "My God!" he exclaimed in pain, "is the girl a guillotine? Is she without bowels of mercy?" and indirectly through the Sinderngabya (Guardian of the Sad), being unable to send direct, he sent a message to Spiciewegiehotiu, proffering himself, since he was the cause of the fault and fall of those five unfortunates, to die in their stead, or in the stead of any one of them.

Twelve days later he received the answer: "Spiciewegiehotiu say You die the day she want, not before, not after"; and the official added in a confidential manner: "You lie low—not worry her: she cross like a thicket of prickly-pears these days. They say she not sleep at night, she find no rest, because the lady Sueela gone; and now war coming——"

"War? With whom? War? What for?"

"Me not know. Maybe no war; maybe war. Some say yes, some say no. War with Sebingwe—if it come."

"Heavens!—another . . . But tell me—is there no chance at all of these five unfortunates being spared?"

" No chance : to-morrow they die. But everybody grumbling because they die before you ; everybody waiting—your turn next they say. You lie low—maybe you not die. Some have it to say maybe you take the Queen's fancy ! Ha, ha, they a jealous, suspicious lot ; and their tongues ! *Waw !* "

Their jealousy and suspicion and tongues were to be given an impulse ! for on the thirty-first day of his imprisonment, a few days after the execution of the five, Cobby, to the surprise and offence of all, saw himself set free, and in the kotla was followed by a mob that goggled and nodded at him with no good-will.

His liberators, under instructions to conduct him straight to the Queen, failed in this, he flatly refusing, saying, " No I have to bathe " ; but, this done, he went—to find Spiciewegiehotiu like " a bear with a sore head !"—or a lion. " You not tired of ' The Elephant ' ? " she asked, spinning sharply upon him.

" Yes," he answered, " and of you, and of Wo-Ngwanya."

This held her arrested. " You tired of me ? "

" Yes, and of all your ruthlessness and wars."

" Oh, me not want any long logic ! Me only want to know one thing of you : you done now trying to carry me off where me not want to go ? "

" Quite done," he answered : " never again—you have my undertaking. Now I go alone."

At which her lip whitened with spite, her eyes spitting fire. " Bah ! " she bitterly said, " you can't " —glancing backward at him, pacing the hut—" me drag you back by your red hair."

" Be quiet," he answered with the authority of a pride quiet, yet impassioned to pomposity : " you are speaking to a priest and king of kings. If I tell you that I can go, you are not to say that I cannot. It was my reluctance to forsake Macray that has held me here, but I am no longer reluctant—to-day I hear that Macray is even seeking to instigate the people against me. So when I will I go, having a hundred and twenty winged horses to haul me by a path that

no hawk knows, and the hounds of your scouts cannot pursue their spoor. Be quiet."

This again gave her pause, she standing rather agape—since savage and semi-savage intellects more or less believe every marvel they hear.

"Where you have these hundred and twenty horses?" she wished to know.

"Horse-power: in some cans."

But this defied credulity—horses with wings in cans, potted horses with wings. And yet—having a trust in his statements, having beheld his marvels at the banquet, she half-believed; a half-belief which had power to make her pale.

She faced him to ask: "And, if you could go, you would go?"

"Yes; duty; work to do; duty."

"Without me?"

"Yes."

"Go, then," she muttered, turning from him; and then she span to scream at him "Go! Go!" and stamp at him.

"Dear love!"

"Go!" she screamed again, glaring at him.

"Don't be angry with me," he now gently said. "Why are you so cross? You don't look well. . . ."

This broke her down. "Oh!" she cried out, running to him, and, her forehead on his shoulder, wailed: "Me want Sueela! Me want her!"

He felt her bosom bob sobbingly without any sound coming, and "Heavens!" he exclaimed, "then, why have you married her to Daisy?"

Her eyes fixed him with a glance, then dropped, she not saying anything, till she made the remark, apparently irrelevant: "Maybe war coming; Sebingwe——"

"Yes, another," said Cobby dryly, "I know: Sebingwe this time. Why, why, can you not live——?"

She interrupted. "Now you see why me marry Sueela to Daisy: *partly* why"—again she fixed him a little with that silent eye, saying "*partly*."

" No, I don't see——"

" But you know that Daisy and Sebingwe friends ? and if Sueela married to Daisy she not let Daisy help Sebingwe against me. Maybe Sueela not love—me ; but she love Wo-Ngwanya mad : so now Sebingwe never have help against Wo-Ngwanya."

" I see !—you artful being. Policy, policy, all is policy with Spiciewegiehotiu ! and for policy she will pluck out her own heart, and the hearts of those that love her. But why, after all, fight Sebingwe ? Why not live——? "

" Cobby, me tell you "— her hand on his arm—" me not fight Sebingwe : if we fight, Sebingwe fight *me.* You believe me, no, Cobby ? Sebingwe fight *me.* Ten days ago me send an embassy to Sebingwe to ask him *how* it was that so many Wa-Mashenya fight in Daisy's army the last time Daisy fight me ? and me ask Sebingwe if he willing to hand over to me as slaves those Wa-Mashenya that fight against me. No harm in that, Cobby, no ? You see, no ? that me not pick any quarrel with Sebingwe. Sebingwe send me an insulting answer : he say *Noh !* he not willing. So, Cobby, you see, no ? that it is Sebingwe——"

" Quite so," said Cobby : " Sebingwe had no right to let his men fight against you. . . ."

She danced two steps behind his back.

" So, Cobby, if Sebingwe fight me, you fight this time for me, no ? "

" You may be sure !—on condition that I find your account of it true : for you deceived me in respect of the Daisy-quarrel, remember—deliberately. But, if your quarrel is just, those who insult you insult me, and those who fight you fight the lightning. When I said that I am going from you on my winged horses, I didn't mean that I'd go if you are in any trouble or peril : in trouble I am with you till the day of death, your trouble being my trouble, since somehow your blood is my blood, and your life my life."

Their eyes met, and in his and in hers the same tear burned and quivered, by the work and miracle of that

quick Spirit that erewhile whispered, Let there be Life ! and Life quickened and quivered, burned, bled, yearned, yelled. . . .

" Cousin Cobby . . ." she held out her hand, and he held it, felt it, possessed it, flesh and bone, appropriating it sacramentally in his breast, until she shivered, and drew it, her lids drooping, and moved from him.

" Still," he said, " there is no need for any war, I hope : things can be adjusted. Think, dear, of the waste, not of blood only, but of wealth and effort. They say the M'Niami people are still impoverished, while you here——"

" Oh, war good, me know," she interrupted : " it make stronger men and cleverer girls : and, if that cost dear, it worth it. If only the men had no more than one wife, plenty of war would make us gods."

His eyebrows lifted. " Indeed ? " says he. " Tell me : what makes you think that ? "

" Me reckon it up ; me see, me know. . . . War make less men, and so permit a man to pick out a better mother for his young."

Dumb-struck stood Cobby and agape ; as he writes in his diary of it : " Here was ' a new thing ' for me. For though Darwin and that school, like her, were sure that ' war is good,' Darwin thought that the good must come through fatherhood—never somehow thought of motherhood—*forgot* that there are mothers, too—and, in arguing that the good comes through fatherhood, refuted himself (since the bravest fall), *saw* anon that he refuted himself, and was perplexed, though still convinced that ' war is good.' So I stood dumb before her, thinking in myself, ' Dear me, had I to come to Africa to hear this ? ' But by her theory war must be accompanied by monogamy ; otherwise, after the war, the remaining men simply take more wives, including the riff-raff. Does this explain the stationariness of savages, of Asia ? Heaven knows ! Some time I must give the matter some systematic study."

But instead of attempting now to deal with theory

he returned to the personal, saying to her : " So, then, you *want* war ? "

" No, no, no," she hastily answered : " Cobby me not want war !—you believe me, no ? *Sebingwe* want war. War good, me say, but me not want war —now. And suppose me want war ! " she boldly added, " Cobby, you not see why ? "

" No, I don't——"

" Cobby, the people not like you. At first they like you, but you make them not like you. If you fight for them, and win, they like you. And even if they not like you then, war—and victory—crown me with the power to live up to my dreams, and snap my fingers in their faces. Now you see, no ? "

" Yes, but at what a cost—to other people ! " he cried out. " Suppose that war, as you say, *is* ' good ' for the stock : then, the forces of Nature may be depended upon to bring about war, whoever doesn't want it ; but is it not the obvious duty of the individual, for *his* part, to put forth all his effort to avert so much woe and waste of work ? "

" Eheh—of course," she answered with the shadow of a smile, eyeing a match which she had lighted : for, supplied by the white men with matches, she kept a box on her, and, miserly-spendthrift, would anon strike one as a fire-work, to entertain herself.

Cobby then asked when her next message was to be sent to Sebingwe ; to which she answered : " To-day. . . . His men here waiting. . . ."

" And will you send a mild message ? Come to some compromise——"

She smiled to herself, then on a sudden, dashing down the match-end, pettish, pouting : " Oh, Cobby, me sad, me mad, me cross, me want Sueela ! If me not have Sueela, me fight everybody."

" What *can* one do ? " cried Cobby.

" Me low, me mean, yes," she muttered as to herself : " me have no pride ; but—she gone—me not see her any more."

" Why not send—— ? " he began to say, when, a

sound from outside coming to them, she started, breathing "What that?" then sharply ran to the door to hearken.

A noise of voices brawling afar was brought her on the breeze, in whose embroilment after a minute her ear seemed to hear insistently: "Send the white men away!"—and she became deadly pale.

Then, running toward the hut from the avenue gate, she saw a guardsman all wafted backward by a gale that was trouncing the forestry like a rout of frocks tossed in profligate carousal; and he at her whisper, "What's happening?" answered: "Bayeté! the people call out to you send the white men away; they press against the sigodhlo gate; Sir Caray on his horse haranguing them. . . . He say Sir Cobby soon carry you off from them, if you not send him away . . . and they angry. . . . Sir Caray say you want Sir Cobby for—yourself. . . ."

"The scum!" with a coarse contempt her countenance scowled; red rage rushed to her brow; and round about she ranged almost at a run, like one evading something which chases. "The scum! Me show them white men—war for them! If you not bleed them, they not believe in you; if you not kick and cuff them, they not love you. War! War! The scum! Me drench Wo-Mashenya in blood—me show them advising——"

"I think," Cobby ventured to say, "that you might comfort yourself with some calm."

"Oh, dung to *you!*" she intolerantly retorted, slapping her haunch at him: "you think me care what you have to say?" and down now she let herself flop upon the floor like a child in a tantrum, her heels beating a tattoo, her face a painting of vexation; but then sprang up to scream in a passion to the guardsman: "Have Sebingwe's embassy summoned to me! Me show the scum blood!"

"If I may venture——" Cobby stiffly began to say.

"You not hear me say me not want to *hear?*" her

flying tongue shrilled, she spinning upon him. "How long you going to stay here? All day? My goodness, you can't leave me when you once see me? You think me have nothing to think about but *you?*"

With an elegant dignity Cobby bowed, and, without a word, turned and went out.

"Go home!" she called after: "you not to go outside the sigodhlo."

"I go where I please," he answered, chin up.

But half-way to the park gate he paused at the thought that he ought to do something or other to stop her from sending a message to Sebingwe in her then temper; and he went back to say: "If you will promise not to send to Sebingwe until half-time before noon to-morrow morning, I will bring you Sueela by then."

This arrested her. "You talking wild, no? . . . You not get half to M'Niami by then."

"I will, and be back. Promise."

She stood with suspended breath. This interested her—both the extraordinary voyage, and the object of it—interesting both her curiosity and her longing.

"How you 'will'? . . . And you think me want to see her?—that snake? that strumpet?"

"You said that you wanted. She is not a snake nor a strumpet."

"How you know? *You know her well, no?* No! Me not want! You and she enjoy the voyage together, no?"

"I don't—understand you. . . . Then, I won't go. But please don't see Sebingwe's embassy yet——"

Now she yielded to yearning, and said averted: "Go, if you like. . . . Yes, go. Me see if you come back by half-time before noon. Me not see the embassy till then; but then me see it, and send it back."

"Very good, you undertake—good-bye." He went quickly away.

XXX

IN THE CANES

CALLINGS and noises of the populace beyond the sigodhlo gate were still distinctly audible anon, as Cobby walked from the royal gate to prepare for his trip ; and he had not long gone when Macray, gaining an entrance at the sigodhlo gate, presented himself at the royal gate to see the Queen.

Macray was at present in a very impatient, a very dangerous and devilish frame. He had said to himself : " I want to *go*, and I'm *going*—free America ! " And that day, on hearing of Cobby's release, he no longer allowed himself to doubt that Spiciewegiehotiu must be " gone on " Cobby, and had no intention of ever letting Cobby go—for he no longer feared that *she* would ever go ; and since she meant to keep Cobby, she must mean to keep him, Macray, who was her natural ally against Cobby. Hence his oratory from horseback, explaining to the mob that Cobby must be sent away. He had, moreover, a dread that Cobby, who was also impatient to be away, might now go off alone in his aeroplane, and, Cobby once gone, Macray understood that the shears would be sharp to cut short, for he was sure that Spiciewegiehotiu knew him, and did not love, nor had forgotten that stew which the dog would not touch. . . .

Her he hated much more than Cobby, who had dared to slap, to lay hands upon his body with chloroform ; *her* death would cut the knot of all his difficulties ; and he now contemplated bringing it about, together with Cobby's and thousands, probably, of other deaths, and this in due course of business, with that recklessness of Peace or Rockefeller, without respect or prick of pity.

But when he presented himself at the royal gate,

though conscious of danger, he little dreamt in how dreadful a peril a phrase of Cobby's, lately uttered, had put him : for Cobby had undertaken to Spiciewegiehotiu never more to attempt to carry her off ; and since she had a trust in Cobby's promises, her use for Macray was now wholly over, she now being as ready and prompt to slay as he : so that, as between her and him, climax and crisis was here, and he was unlikely on the morrow to scatter oratory upon the Wa-Ngwanya.

Intending to arrest him that very day of oratory, and reckoning that he would draw revolver when arrested, she welcomed his request for an interview ; for, since interviewers left their weapons at the gate, to grant the interview, and arrest within, might be to save a life, or lives.

So it was some minutes before he was admitted ; then, putting down weapons, as usual, at the portals, he went in. But at his knee, within the bagging of his knickerbockers, he had a small revolver for self-defence, if necessary.

Having offered a stool she said : " Well, Sir Caray, what you want ? "

" Look here, Great-great," says he, " I want to go home : can I go ? or am I a prisoner ? "

Her answer, she having " spotted " the object in his knickerbocker-knee, was : " Prisoner ? You go when you like."

" You won't be dragging me back, if I start ? "

" No, no : me not 'fraid of Sir Cobby any more. You go."

Now, standing up, she paced the room once, never turning her back to him, while his thought was : " Why not get her now ? " But he feared the people ; and had neater plans. As to her affable manner, that little convinced him.

When she sat anew, she moved her stool between him and the door : and he noted this.

" Well, I don't believe you mean it," he said—" I'm frank. But, come : let's do a deal ! *I* want some-

thing, and *you* want something. *I* want to go, and *you* want Cobby. Now, you can't keep Cobby, for he has means to go that you can't dream of, and he *will* go, for he's told me so. So, if *I* tell you how to keep Cobby for ever, and if *you* swear by 'The Elephant' to let me go, that will be fair."

Unexpected matter for her. She could not quite conceal her keenness. "Yes!" she said: "that fair."

"Well, swear," said he.

"Oh, no—you tell me first," says she: "then me swear"—scratching a parrot's neck.

"Very good—— I'll trust you. Well, this is what I say: to keep Cobby, you must destroy his waggon-loads. Now, breaking up is no good, for, while you were breaking up half, he'd be off with the other half; and there are a lot of little spirits in his things, little but strong, which you can't break up. So only fire is any good."

She was silent, but bright were her eyes. He understood that she would do it.

Often the thought of breaking up had occurred to her, but inertly in her lack of certain knowledge; also she had had it in mind to learn first what the different things were "good for." She had not thought of firing them: and it was the thought of Cobby, on his return, finding all his "winged horses" burned, and himself her prisoner for life, that lit up her eyes with that fire of spite and triumph.

But for Macray the question now was *when* she would do it, he wishing to be out of Eshowe then, there being that in the waggons which, with a blaze under them, would blow, not only Spiciewegiehotiu and Cobby, but Eshowe itself to heaven.

"Now have I deserved your thanks?" he asked her.

"Maybe——" she shrugged, she smiled.

"You mean to do it, then. But—when?"

That evening she meant to, Cobby's intended departure for M'Niami fitting in with so neat and sweet a temptingness; but, by nature, reticent, she merely answered: "Some time, maybe, me do it."

"But tell me definitely."

She shot a glance. "Why?"

"I think I'd like to clear out of Eshowe just then," —he chuckled—"Cobby will be so madly angry, and he'll guess who told you to do it."

As he said this, he saw one of the swaths of hangings round the room move somewhat; and as she, too, saw it, and saw that he saw, the situation between them became thenceforth extremely tense and keen.

"No fear," she answered: "Sir Cobby just going away somewhere. . . . Tell me: how long it take him to go to M'Niami and come back?"

"M'Niami? Four days." He had now unbuttoned his knickerbocker-knee, and placed the revolver on his knee under her eyes—to bid her forbear and beware, to bid her be certain that of those who bit the dust *she* would be the first; and "Cobby going to M'Niami?" says he: "what for? Oh, I see—to bring Sueela?"

Now they were sitting tight on the *qui vive*—eye, ear, each nerve alert—leaning a little toward each other, each knowing that life was the victor's prize, she with her finger-joints at her cheek, thinking on him, her eyes alight, active as cats on prickles to spring. As to the object of Cobby's voyage she did not answer, but said suddenly: "Forgive me—you take some snuff, no?"—and presented snuff.

This a little nonplussed him: at once he fathomed her motive for *having* it, but not for showing it—unless it was the same motive with which he showed the revolver, to warn him? And he was nonplussed because unsure, and because sure that it was well to be sure, in such a war the victory being to him who thinks the greatest number of true thoughts per second.

"Thank you, Great-great," says he, taking the box, and barely pretending to inhale, for he thought of poison in it; at the same time he let the snuff slip his fingers to the floor, having no desire to have it flung at his eyes.

"Oh, bad man," she pouted—"spill all the snuff. That bring bad luck for you."

"Clumsy!" he said: "forgive me."

"Me forgive you. . . . So Sir Cobby can't go and come back by to-morrow?"

"No, how can he?—unless he uses some of the little spirits. . . . He going to-day? Then now's your chance to fire the waggons, while he's gone. Why not to-day?"

"Maybe"—she shrugged, she smiled: and then she went "Tishum!" and cried out "Oh! ha, ha."

"Ha, ha," he laughed, and sneezed.

"Ha, ha—we both have it!" she laughed.

"Yes, ha, ha——" like chums they chuckled with each other.

"And now," he next said—for form's sake, not caring at all—"it is for you to swear that you'll let me go."

"Yes, that fair," she answered, standing up: "me go get a talisman to swear on"—and made a movement toward the door.

But she was his hostage there, and safeguard, against those behind the hangings; and jumping up now, with a flush of authority, he called out: "Oh, no, you don't: here you remain"—and so crossed the Rubicon.

In that same moment snuff was fire in his eyes—tossed from *another* box; and into his darkness, even as he darkly shot at her, there flashed now a knowledge of the reason why she had offered snuff—in order that, if any thought of snuff was in him, it might be utterly lulled, in order that he might spill the snuff, and think her foiled at that point at least, and feel comfortable as to snuff, and be utterly routed and bound up by the surprise of the blinding lightning of a second box kept ready under her kaross; and when after his second of dismay and disaster he darkly fired at where she had been standing, she was lying at his feet, and in some moments more was soundlessly out of the hut, and flying to hiding.

But he, conscious of the direction of the doorway, had one leg out of it almost as soon as she ; but there was seized by five, two of whom fell wounded before he lost the revolver, and the others, at that awkward spot, failed to take him. He was away into the wood, they pursuing, shooting.

Ecstasy lent him legs, extremity gave him sight, blasphemy gave him luck : he clambered over the enclosure, untouched, unnoticed, jumped—not far from the gate—and at a run got his Winchester before the astonished gate-guards could take it upon themselves to stop him ; he got beyond the sigodhlo gate, vaulted upon his horse, and was gone as the swallow swings, hatless, wind-swept, to the bewilderment of the mob still populous in the square. But before he was past the market, he was being pursued by riders, firing at him, and thence to the great-gate he galloped firing backward with his repeater, seeing three pitch headlong, himself uninjured ; then, trampling through the great-gate guards, made off, laying men low, over the road eastward, and so won clear away.

Pitiable, now, however, was his plight—his bridges all burned behind him ; no compass ; little ammunition ; no possibility of crossing Africa without, no possibility of going back to get, until Spiciewegiehotiu, firing the waggons, destroyed herself, no hope else of getting out of Wo-Ngwanya ; no hope else of living in it. Still, he was game ; he hoped, he chuckled.

Some way out of Eshowe he was aware of a shouting in the town—yet another white-man amazement being that day in store for the mob, when Cobby, throbbing on his motor-bicycle, passed rough and rapid, spattering puff-puff, trumpeting, dragon-goggled, a streak of unreason, all down the awna, and out.

Backing into bush, Macray watched him come carrying on the carrier a black who clung like the drowning about him, blanched to his tongue ; and within that bush a Winchester was lifted to lay low : for though Macray's enmity against Cobby was not constant and intense, as against the Queen, as against Sueela, yet,

having shot many, and being shot at, just to shoot had become habitual, and a bitter amusement : so he might then have shot at Cobby, but for his knowledge that Cobby was on the way to fetch Sueela, and that by letting Cobby fetch her, by waiting a day, he would be even with Sueela, might even manage to ravish ere he smashed, ere he left her red. This was snuff and fun to him that, if he died, there would be society, for, as to Spiciewegiehotiu, he was sure that she would fire the waggons, and dance fandango and devil-dance with Eshowe in the air. He cantered on further, then, taking his nag into canes, lay in the glimmering in there to ponder upon his misery, to plot and to curse and to lurk, and cock his ear for the throbbing of Cobby's return with the girl, and for the shock and earthquake of the event at Eshowe.

XXXI

NIGHT-RIDE

AFTER a rough passage, in the course of which he cast hundreds of kraals and huts and lions into dumbness of affright at the sight of a flagrant dragon flying with muttering through the night, Cobby's cycle-lamp invaded the midnight dimness of the sigodhlo of Daisy's great-place ; and " my goodness " was on Sueela's lips, seeing him, and " eheh, me come," sleep still winking on her lids.

" But your husband ? " Cobby suggested.

" Oh, *he* . . . Me go tell him."

Whereupon Daisy was but briefly consulted, for he within some weeks had been adequately sat upon, and was a bottom-dog ; and before long they were off, she with shut lids in bliss on the carrier embracing Cobby's body, bliss combined with a bicycle-terror which would have been greater but that she had witnessed the grin of arrival and delight of the guide brought by Cobby, and now left behind.

Wild was that night of flight for Sueela, an experience of teeming mysteriousness, and drama of vast darkness, dismal with winds screaming, mixed with myriads of trees streaming in retreat, series of drear sceneries receding, to be remembered in dreams for ever. It was no fun, however : no moon mostly ; only stars wind-whiffed like hall-lamps, noises of many waters, sometimes the sharp wash of a shower, which passed, the road not continuous, never smooth ; thrice the bicycle had to be hauled through the brawling and rocks of broad shallow waters, and where patches of pathless shrub meant many a jolt ; there were hills whose descent meant peril of a breaking of brakes, and hills up whose incline the bicycle, a paltry thing of four and a half horse power, barely crawled, till they

walked beside it : so toward daybreak, harassed and hot, Cobby stopped in forest on the brink of a river to eat a meal, Sueela seated very near him, but separate, incapable of eating, and once he, *en bon camarade*, put an arm about her, which she very gently and slowly removed, remarking : " She trust me with you."

" Not without reason," he answered : " you are a dear good thing, and I have a sister whom I do not love more than you."

" You love me, no ? " she whispered, stroking his arm distantly with fingers intensely stretched : " that enough for me—me could do without food and bed, and yet my belly full, if you love me. And you think me not pay you back ? Me toss all at your dear feet—you think me care ?—me give you Wo-Ngwanya—my land !—me love its old stones, and how it smell on wet days—me give it—and my mother—my brothers—my friends—they all say ' traitress ! '—they spit on my name—*she* spit—me not care—me do it for you and for her."

A sob : and he said " dear," but added : " Though I don't understand : how will you give me Wo-Ngwanya ? and why will they say ' traitress ' ? "

" Wait till me know if she fight Sebingwe," she replied : " then me tell you."

" She *will* fight, I think," Cobby said, " if we are not there in time before she sends back Sebingwe's embassy, for she is at present in a most morose and dangerous mood, owing apparently to her fretting after you. So with you it rests, Sueela, and I depend upon you to stop anything in the way of war, since there is no need."

She smiled at him as at a child, without reply ; and he said : " Come then," springing up.

Then for three hours more they tholed the roughness of the trip, and now in sunlight were running down a bit of road with canes on both sides some ten miles from Eshowe, when a report of rifle-shot sounded out of the (south) canes on their left. The hill being

steep, the pace brisk, neither was hit, but a second shot pierced the flesh of Cobby's left arm, upon which he lost control of himself and the motor, which dashed up a bank to the right, and collapsed over driver and passenger—luckily in bush and canes, which concealed them from yet a bullet ; and with instant nimbleness Sueela on her feet had Cobby by the hand, haling him into the thick of the canes.

There they squatted some time, all ear and leer, mouse-quiet but for the little movements of Sueela binding Cobby's wound ; and, " Who *can* it be ? " Cobby whispered, to which she whispered back : " Sh-h—*Caray*."

Now another report—from farther in the canes than they, the shooter having crossed the road ; and now with a flush Cobby shot his revolver : upon which he and she moved softly off to lurk within some other home of the murky world of thicket.

Other shots followed. The canes being a sea in agitation billowing under the blasts of the winds, the swish of local agitations may have attracted the aim of the gunman, whose roaming and mysterious gun bred not merely terror but a sort of awe, as though a ghost was gunning ; and immense, moreover, was Cobby's dismay at the time going, the loss of so many lives involved in the delay, the object of his voyage to Daisy's frustrated, for already he was late for his rendezvous with Spiciewegiehotiu at Eshowe, and still a prisoner there in the canes.

Meantime, to each shot which smashed through the leafage a shot of his answered sharply back in challenge, he quickly shifting his position after it ; and so an hour and a half passed, he having now one cartridge only.

After a monotony of twenty minutes he whispered : " I can bear this no more : going : you stay, until I bring a force of men."

" Me come," she whispered.

" Why ? I forbid."

He kissed her hand, looked at a little compass, stole

off toward the road, and had nearly reached it, when not far to his left a sound arose—a neigh.

Down he crouched, mouse-still, waiting, and presently again the neigh came from the same place.

He saw that, since there was a horse, if he could capture it, mount it *in* the canes, and dash out and away on it, that might be well: and on hands and knees he crept that way, keenly peering.

Presently he became aware of the breath of a horse, then saw it eating at the canes, and then, near the horse, caught sight of a man lying blanched and unconscious, a rifle beside him.

When Cobby bent over him, he discovered that Macray had been struck in the left patella; and now his shouts for Sueela began to sound through the canes, till she came brushing through.

Her nose wrinkled with repulsion at Macray: and when, after lifting, they laid him down, her stretched fingers shrank from off him, as if to finger him was filthy.

Having got him out of the cane and upon the nag, Cobby with difficulty fixed him by means of part of the nag's reim, and, after making fast the remainder of it to the motor, moved slowly on, towing him. But half-way to Eshowe Macray came out of his faint, and in a sick voice sang out: "Hallo, baas; hallo, Black Sue; where you taking me to? I don't want to go to Eshowe"—but got no answer.

As they entered Eshowe near one o'clock they saw the awna all populous, and from all quarters swarmed a multitude to gloat over the motor, to greet Sueela, to gape at Macray, and to call out the news of war declared in the awna at noon by the Queen, who had accused Sebingwe of malignity, flung down the glove, and sent back the Wo-Mashenya embassy with gage of battle.

Wild with excitement were all eyes, and it was with pelting steps to go to the sigodhlo that Sueela left Cobby near the market, he with Macray now going westward to Macray's hut, where, while he waited

for the turning up of his surgical-case, he said distantly to Macray : " What in God's name have I done to you that you should shoot at me ? I hope you haven't got ' malevolence-of-the-insane.' "

" Baas," Macray said from his deck-chair, " you struck me, you know, you chloroformed me. No man may take such liberties with me. But it wasn't you I wanted to get, it was that strumpet."

And he said again when the leg was being made a septic: " Where's the good, inkoos ? There's been a rumpus between that Flora Macray and me : she'll have me dead before sunset."

" She will do nothing of the kind," Cobby answered, " for I shouldn't suffer it."

" Oh, you aren't a bad old baas . . . But don't think you can stop her ; the bitch'll have her will, if she lives."

Cobby but half-chloroformed him, and then, eating melons for a meal, hung on at the hut : for since his trained hands had no special training in surgery, he was flurried and nervous there, and made himself nurse as well as surgeon.

In the midst of which ministries, in rushed one of Macray's men to tell that some men were coming with a stretcher to take Macray ; and in some moments Cobby saw five giants coming up the bush-approach to the hut : on which he stepped out to confront them.

One of them mentioned that they came to take Sir Caray to " The Elephant " ; whereupon Cobby : " Oh, but that's out of the question. Surely you know that the man's leg is fractured : ' The Elephant ' may kill him. You will be good enough to wait, until I see the Queen and explain."

The negroes glanced at one another and grinned. " We not come to wait," one said.

Cobby now flushed in his hot way, saying : " Oh, but you *are*."

" We *not*."

" You *are*—You have to do as you are told."

Now from out of the hut sounded : " Baas, it's no good ! "

Of which Cobby took no notice, but said in another tone to the men : " How can you be so inhuman ? White men are framed with the same infirmities and require the same mercies as yourselves. I will see the Queen——"

" Come, clear out, Sir Cobby," one interrupted with some roughness, " you make us cross."

On which another flush rushed up Cobby's forehead, and now, drawing his revolver, he said : " Whoever first enters this hut will be shot."

Again the negroes grinned with one another, and now laid down the stretcher, while one of them went running out of the grounds through a crowd that had come in from the near street to see the thing through.

Then ten minutes of suspense—babble, jocularities, from the mob, expostulations from Macray, from the men, who pointed out that they were but obeying orders : Cobby stood, revolver in hand ; and when the one who had run out returned at a trot with a body of some thirty, Cobby with his revolver marked a mark on the path, beyond which to put a foot was to be shot.

This made deadlock. The negroes grinned ; none wished to be shot ; none thought of retreat. Then one ventured to protrude a toe over the mark—pretending negligence ; and Cobby saw it, and knew that it was not done in negligence, and did not shoot—as Napoleon would have shot, as Cromwell ; but Cobby was not Cromwell—higher type, less efficient anon as to the special little end, enormously more efficient, in a more complex cosmos, as to the general business of living in a cosmos—Cromwell, Napoleon, being hardly so much as *conscious* of a cosmos, imagining that God is a Baptist, a Girondin ; but He is an electrochemist.

And then at once the frogs hopped upon the log —they rushed him ; and he, having one bullet, could well have shot somebody then, but—did not. He

was pretty roughly dealt with ; and the only result—to the *eye*—for the *time*—of his intervention was that he lost a revolver, which he never got again. Accompanied by him, Macray was taken away, a pitiable enough poor man, come upon misfortune, and pretty obviously on the road to ruin. He was put into a punt at the edge of " The Elephant " pool where, as they parted, the two shook hands.

XXXII

THE WAGGONS

MEANWHILE with pelting steps Sueela sped to the Queen's, and with keen expectancy peeped into the hut—no open arms there, only the new favourite, who started up to tell that Spiciewiehotiu was farther in the wood, where some waggons were, and ran to show the way with Sueela, whose forerunning heart and sprinting feet outstripped her.

The waggons were in a glade shut within jungle, with them the Queen and four men, who were making fuel-heaps under them : and there stood Sueela, eager, suspended, a gazelle that grinned, a grace awaiting her welcome, until the Queen turned her head a little to observe : " Oh, you come."

" My goodness. . . ."

" What you come for ? "

" Come for ? You not send for me ? "

" Me ? No."

Sueela, averted, eyed alternately the earth and the sky, and within her neck the world ached.

" All right, my girl . . . What me done to you, Spiciewegiehotiu ? "

" To me ? You not done anything . . . So you just come ? You get here quick. You liked the ride, no ? "

" Yes, me and Sir Cobby come tearing on a carriage with only two wheels, and no horses ! Sir Cobby say the horses inside."

" Eheh, me hear all about it. Sir Cobby know a lot : but he not know everything."

" Oh, Spiciewegiehotiu . . . So *this* is what me dream of all night, *this* is what me fly to . . . Me go . . . Good health."

" Where you go to ? "

" Me go back to my Kingdom."

" When me tell you to ? or before ? "

" Oh, me not belong to you now, my girl ! "

" Who you belong to ? To—Sir Cobby ? "

Sueela eyed her with a weighing underlook. " Me belong to myself. Me a Queen like you. You think you can treat me cruel like this ? No, me not love you any more."

" You ever loved me ? "

" Oh, no, never ! Never ten times more than my own—" here her voice weakened, and Spiciewegiehotiu, still averted, turned her head at her to say : " Yes, cry : you think, if you cry, me cry, too."

Whereupon Sueela laughed across a sob : " You crying, my girl ! "

And Spiciewegiehotiu, with working nostrils, laughed also : " Oh, you silly thing ! "

Upon which their hands, magnetized, found out each other, and Sueela drew her. And presently Spiciewegiehotiu : " Come—You hungry ? "

" Eheh."

" Come "—and off in a flutter they dashed chattering, Spiciewegiehotiu calling over her shoulder to the men to go on making the fuel-heaps under the waggons, which she had brought over from Cobby's park the previous evening, intending to burn them then ; but, on learning the wild tidings of Cobby's bicycle flying down the kotla, had paused, reflecting that that bicycle might be the very means of Cobby's threatened escape, and that, if she fired the waggons at once, then Cobby, on finding out, might, in his " mad anger," predicted by Macray, at once fly off on the bicycle : so she had decided to wait a day, acquire the bicycle also, then fire all.

" But you going to burn his waggons ? " Sueela with a start asked on the way to the hut.

" What's that to you ? " Spiciewegiehotiu answered, stopping.

" Nothing !—my goodness." But inwardly appalled

for Cobby, and knowing that pleading would be useless, she added with a quick use of wit: "But you found out what all the different things good for?"

"No, me not found out; me neglect it . . . Let them go. Me not want a subject in Wo-Ngwanya more powerful than his sovereign."

"Me see . . . But, my goodness, you not wait and find out first, and then burn them? Maybe some of them good for the war."

This touched Spiciewegiehotiu in a tender spot. "Maybe," she muttered, "me will see." They went on.

At the hut-door the new Queen's pet was expelled, and within the hut the two spent the afternoon in communion as in the old day, alone but for an intrusion of the sybil and the executioner-brother, until Cobby arrived hot on his bicycle, straight from bidding farewell to Macray at the brink of "The Elephant" lake, he entering saying: "So after all my pains there is to be this war."

"Well, whose fault?" asked Spiciewegiehotiu, looking up from the floor: "Sebingwe's! You say so yourself!"

"Oh, very well, keep on! Some day you will be defeated, and taste that flavour."

She snapped her fingers. "Oh, me never defeated! If me defeated the first and second day, me look to it, and win the third. Even if you not fight with me. But this time you fight."

"Well, I am not pleased. I begged you——"

"*Why* you not pleased? You say you come back at half-way to noon. Me wait till noon—you not come——"

"I was retarded. I come with a bullet-wound in my arm——"

"Me know. Caray never shoot at you any more."

"No, he never will, I am sure," he answered strongly, "whatever chance he may have, for there are other forces than constables and rifles and rods of iron; and I come to plead for that poor man. He is not in

a fit state to be in 'The Elephant'—I supplicate you to let him out till, at all events, he is well."

Smiling steadily up into his face, she answered: "Me will see."

"Good. When?"

"Soon."

"Why not now?"

"No: soon."

"Very well: that is a promise. . . . Well, Sueela? Home again?"

"Eheh," says Sueela contentedly—and then sighed.

"What that thing is you bring her on?" Spiciewegiehotiu now demanded.

"It is called *a bicycle*. . . . Just outside"—he having brought it into the grounds from being mobbed and pawed.

"You show it to me, no? and all those things in your waggons?"

"Very well, some day"—an answer made ten times before.

"No, now," she said.

"Very well, now."

On which she sprang up, saying: "Wait—me soon come back," and, running out, put finger on lips to Sueela, and flew to the waggons to tell the men to remove the fuel quick from under them.

Meantime Cobby was saying to Sueela: "Well, here you are safe—what a ride last night! winds, and forests, and solitary rivers wandering along; and then that ordeal in those canes. Aren't you sleepy? I am now."

"No, me could do it again to-night and to-morrow night, and not sleep," she told him.

"You excellent thing! And you have done her good already, I think. Does she love you just as before?"

"Eheh." Then she sighed; and suddenly covered her eyes to say: "But she not love me long."

"Not? Why?"

"Because me give her to you."

He stood over her. "*How*, Sueela? Tell me."

"Me take her throne from her: then she go with you. She think that, if she beat Sebingwe, victory give her the power to marry you; but she wrong: me know the Wa-Ngwanya—they not like you—they not stand a white King—not for long. And she think if she marry you, her breasts satisfy you; but she wrong: me know you; you not want to stay; if she make you stay, you hate her. She think she can work out what she want, but me sure she can't—even if she beat Sebingwe. So she not beat Sebingwe: me make Sebingwe beat her."

Cobby stood pale—scared! then, looking on the ground, paced once the length of the room, anew assailed by temptation. But he had *undertaken* to be done with any more scheming to force the Queen away, and he chuckled uneasily, making the lame, and not too true, remark: "I am afraid I don't understand. . . ."

Sueela's forehead was dropped quite down; there just reached him from her a moan of "Wo-Ngwanya! *my land!*" and she raised strained wild eyes to say to him: "Then you love me well, no? Me do a lot, a lot, for you."

"Oh, Sueela, be quiet," he cried, stamping about with that energetic action of his elbows: "I don't—I won't—understand you. Daisy has nothing to do——"

"*Sh-h-h*, she come back. And about your waggons, —listen: look after your waggons——"

This in just a whisper pitched to reach his ear, but he, astonished, cried out "*Waggons!*" and then saw Spiciewegiehotiu's face in the doorway looking from one to the other of them.

Some moments of dumbness followed, deeply awkward for Sueela, who had promised to tell nothing of the fate overhanging the waggons, till Cobby came out with: "Well, now, come, I will show you my wonders"—and stepped out.

He had made some steps down the avenue when the Queen with a sheepish half-laugh remarked: "The waggons in here!"

"My waggons?" He was all astonishment. "Why in here?"

For safety—she explained, now looking him straight in the face: rumours of menaces made by the mob to *burn* the waggons had reached her ears: so, for safety——

Cobby was very perturbed. "*Why* should they burn my waggons? What groundless people! They would never burn anything else!"—a statement whose significance Spiciewegiehotiu did not grasp, nor properly hear it, being now preoccupied over the motor that leaned on a baobab near the hut; and "come, show me!" she said; but now he was cross and sub-anxious, and, the teacher's impulse failing, he merely made them get on, and, sandwiched between hams, rode them exclamatory up and down the avenue, a happy man as to woman's arms.

Dismounting in a flush, Spiciewegiehotiu asked: "So where you put it now?" and when he answered "with the waggons, I suppose," she made a secret grimace of glee. However, she now no more designed to fire, but to hide, it. "It good! It good!" she cried: "there is only Cobby."

Thence they went to the waggons, whence fuel and fuel-heapers had now vanished; and Cobby languidly told what this or that was, but, in general, without effect on their intelligence, the objects having been invented by a different *type*, on a different *plane*, of Mind, and to attempt to explain them was as though a seraph ranted of astral mathematics to a man, and lalled. "What this is?" Spiciewegiehotiu kept on asking, but without gathering much fruit. When she pointed to an accumulator, Cobby could not begin to think how to tell of it: he himself could but little understand that manifestation.

Discontent that the waggons were there, his arm smarting, wearied out and sleepy, he was cross and

short ; conscious that he was wasting breath. " That in the cans is named *petrol*—these are named *bombs*——on this thing one can fly "—words falling like hail upon tin. But there was *one* thing which the Queen's instinct and interest fixed on quick and keen—the machine-gun : just the word " gun " woke her alertness ; and though he hesitated to explain or exhibit its action, as sudden darkness had now come, and she could hardly any longer see the business of his fingers, he shot the gun, to astonish her with those gushes of passion with which it spat and published its bullets.

At which Spiciewegiehotiu's eyes also spat fire ; she understood that it was " good " ; and she decided then not to fire the waggons until the war was all ended, dreading that, if she fired at once, after taking out the gun, Cobby in his anger might refuse to use for her this victorious tool : she being sensitive as to offending him just then.

So there the waggons remained during nearly two weeks, doomed, but respited ; and, meantime, during five days of storm-winds and wet-weather, all in the air was war, war : again the same fever and fierceness against Sebingwe as erewhile against Daisy ; once more everywhere, every moment, that dumb music of the boom and rumble of drums that stubbornly bumped and bumped, movements of troops, a mood of revolution, of holiday, and hell-broken-loose, mock-battles, kerries, cracked bones in the kotla, blasphemous dancings before God, sex gone dog-mad, goggling, haggard, howling, while the nurseling's mouth turned down with rueing to cry, and the rueing eye of the old threw a look at the sky.

As to Cobby, he was once more drilling the rifle-companies, he being now the most miserable of men, fixed in the bitterest dilemma, knowing somewhere within him that he did not mean to lead the riflemen into fight, that this time again he was going to fail the Queen, and, failing her, must die of shame and meanness. Of Sueela he had seen little more, *no* more for any discussion, she having hurried back to M'Niami

on the third day of her visit; and two afternoons afterwards Spiciewegiehotiu in a small squad of horse left Eshowe north-westward for the war, one of her last acts on departing being to dig up that goblet of poisoned *entrée*, which like *foie gras* of Provence she had buried, and to send it to "The Elephant."

XXXIII

THE BANKNOTES

LIKE a man in a bath far too hot for man was Cobby now; and his bosom was a moan. He had said that Sebingwe was in the wrong; had promised to fight Sebingwe; whereupon had come upon him Sueela with her scheme to defeat and dethrone the Queen, and, in the rush of the temptation of it, he, instead of stamping promptly upon it, had said "I don't understand"—though it was easy to understand; and before he could recover himself, Spicewegiehotiu had come back upon them.

The next noon he had hung about the back of the royal park, at a spot once given him as a rendezvous by Sueela—hoping to see Sueela, to forbid her scheme; but, as she had not appeared, he had sent to invite her to his hut, to which she had gone—accompanied by Spiciewegiehotiu; and the next day had departed for M'Niami.

That she meant Daisy's impis to fight on Sebingwe's side was pretty evident, she relying upon Cobby not to fight against the troops which she sent into battle for his good—and, in fact, Cobby saw that, under the circumstances, for him to slay one of those men would certainly be murder. Hence the torment of the horns that tossed him—Sueela relying upon him not to fight as confidently as the Queen upon him to fight. Even after he knew of Sueela's scheme, after Sueela's departure for M'Niami, when the Queen had wished to be assured that he would use the machine-gun, he could discover nothing to say but "I suppose so."

She, noting the groan and agony in his manner, had pondered gravely upon him, vaguely troubled; for, a little before this, the doctoress, with a forehead all

crosses, and a bosom all forebodings, had been closeted with her, imploring her to postpone the war.

Cobby also had implored ; had even said : " Suppose Daisy joins Sebingwe ? "

But at this she had smiled. " That's nonsense. What me have Sueela in M'Niami for ? If one M'Niami man fight against Wo-Ngwanya, Sueela have off his head."

Cobby had groaned ; had said : " Still, Sebingwe and Daisy are natural allies, since you have made them equally nervous of your aims "—but he could see that, unless he revealed to her Sueela's scheme " against " her (as she would say), revealed Sueela's secret committed to him, no reason would cause her to pause—if pause was still possible, for rumours of forward movements of enemy bodies were already abroad. " And to be a party to her disaster ! " he writes at this time, " for, unless I use the guns, there is no possibility of her contending against the impis of Sebingwe and Daisy together. And for *me* to bring her to grief and ignominy, to see her brilliant spirit broken, her glory gone, her throne torn from her, and then to say to her, ' it is for your good, now come with me '—lies and nonsense. Why is it for her good ? Lies and nonsense ! Our civilization is no doubt fated to attain to mountain-tops and sing a hymn, but undoubtedly at the moment it is a sufficiently repulsive bundle of rubbish, blood, and pus, with its lubber ' nobles,' its ' *lords* ' and commons, the lords commoner than the commons, and the commons so common, with its little ' lord-bishops,' all starch and lawn-sleeves, whited to hide the tatters and lice beneath, bribed to bleat to the rabble their feeble blasphemies of Matabeleland—for not much money ! offensive little men : she is quite right, I think, to like and respect a Mo-Ngwanya more than Macray ; and it is because *I* want her—it is for *my* good—that like Iscariot I am betraying her to rack and cross, not for ' her good.' What shall I do ? What, in God's name, *can* a poor man do ? If I had only known when

Sueela was leaving, I might have ridden after, taken her apart from her escort, and bidden her give up the idea ; but, being at the gun-practice, I only knew hours after ; and to follow her on the motor would have been equivalent to ' giving her away ' to the Queen ; so I decided to send my Sansiwana, and at nine last night he started on my Ali for M'Niami with the message ' Do not, I beg '—a step of which the Queen is quite sure to hear ; and done too late, I know. To-morrow she is off for the war, taking my soul with her ; when I am to follow has not been told me ; nor, so far, anything done as to Macray—I now doubt whether she intends to free him, ever, although I have again to-day begged, and again been given hope. Her abominable obduracy sets my blood boiling, and, if she falls, it is just that they that use the sword shall perish by the sword. She has mocked my admonishments and gone her way : well, let her : but, God, let me not once see those eyes weep, for I die. . . . Yes, I will fight Sebingwe : that is my decision now ; but I will not—*can*not—let a shot be aimed by my order at a man of Daisy's. . . ."

The following afternoon Spiciewegiehotiu left Eshowe, and shortly afterwards Cobby got marching-orders—unexpected, there being still several regiments bivouacked in the awna ; but he was probably sent quickly away because Spiciewegiehotiu did not wish him to know then of the doom prepared by her for Macray.

Cobby passed beyond " The Elephant " that midnight, and camped in moonlight within sight of its western cliffs ; but the following morning when all was ready for marching, he did not march—sat on a stone alone, smoking the forenoon away, though he never smoked till late in the day ; saw two bodies of troops move past, and still sat moody, though under orders to be at a particular spot before sunset.

Another meal was eaten there ; it was near noon before he moved ; and he had not marched two leagues farther when a big man beating a pigmy mule was seen

galloping in the rear to catch up the troop. He brought for Cobby a message from the " Guardian of the Sad " (Sinder-ngabya) : Sir Caray was dying ; wanted to see Sir Cobby. The Guardian of the Sad knew that Sir Cobby could not go, but, in compassion, had promised to send the message.

As when water is forced uphill, then with lavish wash at the first chance and turn hurtles into descent, so Cobby turned back at that call, this being escape and hiding-place for him, if but for a time. He announced that he was bound to go, would be back, put a lieutenant in command, sending a message to Spiciewegiehotiu as to why, and with a guide galloped off.

Before sunset he was in a room of " The Elephant " with Macray, who hailed him with, " Well, baas, here we are," and did not look a dying man in the shine of two torches there, though shortly afterwards he was taken with a spasm (tonic), when in the passion of death he arrantly railed like an arch, until tonic merged into clonic, he then jerking himself like earthquake, with a working of the feet that beat together at the great-toes, trembling like trembling-bells.

This happened from time to time : but in the intervals he was lucid, garrulous, nay, gay, or mock-gay, anon, so that Cobby could not but recognize the gameness and invulnerable toughness wherewith this fellow confronted the gray and gulf of death, though already in his gullet, ever and again, a hiccup clicked, tinkling, piteous. . . .

Cobby fancied that what he saw was tetanus, but Macray said : " The knee has nothing—*hic !*—to do with it ! Knee was getting well ; but this noon a new food—a stew—was given me—nice, too ; and ten minutes afterwards I knew she'd poisoned me."

" Shame, oh, shame, she promised . . . " mourned from Cobby.

" It's only fair," Macray said : " woe to the conquered it is ; I wasn't smart enough. Whereas strength is what God honours in a lion, what He honours in a

man is wit—cares nothing for the man's piety, but applauds his wit——"

"You know nothing of the matter," Cobby replied: "the pious receive from Him joys which you do not conceive, hearing a voice sweeter than choirs of sirens."

"Well, that may be so: joys to the pious, but to the witty He gives *life*, and if your pious lad isn't smart enough, or slips where taxis are passing, He'll cut him short off—not a theory, that—matter of fact. Hence I'm here, because she's smarter than I, as I freely admit now. I've pumped the warder, and I think I've been poisoned with some of that very stew that I poisoned for the lot of you——"

"That—*you*—poisoned?"

"Who else, baas?"

On which Cobby's paleness rushed to red, he, in a voice tremulous with emotion, uttering: "Oh, you abominable villain, Douglas Macray!"

"Now, hark at this," Macray muttered: "you might keep your hair on, inkoos. You and I aren't so very unequal: you have a trained brain—*hic!*—and I haven't; but, to make up, mine was born the stronger, I think. Why the horror? My uncle, James Macray, by some trick on slave-labour, which the so-called 'laws' create by recognizing the claim of some individuals to 'own' the earth's crust, contrived to acquire seven million pounds' worth of the limited wealth of a nation, to which fact was due the deaths of hundreds, or thousands, of men, women, and children: that's a fact; if a man said to me, 'I didn't know that,' I'd tell him, 'Then, you're out of it, old chap—born that way.' *You*, anyway, know it, baas: yet you don't look too wildly horrified at that slaughter of whites by the uncle in a white waistcoat, but are horrified because, in order to enjoy the seven millions, the nephew in a belt attempts, and fails, to kill just seven niggers, one white-nigger bitch, and, God forgive me, one good baas. Well, that's cant, of course: that's not scientist eyes, inkoos. So, if you——"

" *You* the nephew of James Macray ? " Cobby broke in, all lost in astonishment.

" Never even suspected. . . . Simple Simon, the scientist. We are cousins, baas : I have you here to give you the seven millions. Don't you remember how you used to ask me where the deuce you'd seen my face ? You'd never seen it, I think, but had no doubt seen a photograph in some magazine—only with a beard. That Master R. K. Rolls spotted me at once that evening I tossed away those false teeth ; and your belief in my story that a lion ate Rolls has made the ghost of that gentleman feel deeply aggrieved. No lion dined on that great hunter before the devil, but I dined. He attacked me on the way to Eshowe ; and we were tied together on a ledge over a precipice, when I, jumping to a lower ledge, pulled him, cut the cord, and the immortal element of him vaulted straight to hell—didn't stop at the bottom—his body stopped —but his soul kept straight on down. Oh, Christ, another gripe coming . . . ! "

By this time, after each seizure and paroxysm, the dying man was being appreciably weakened, racked nearer to defeat ; but it was not till the sun was glorious the next day outside that home of gloom, that his vigorous frame gave in to the antagonist in the last grim round of that ring and wrangle, and the agony lapsed into placidity. And all that time Cobby bided at his side. He told Cobby during the night that if " the bitch " (Spiciewegiehotiu) had followed Cobby to Europe, she would have found herself poor, since he, before he left Europe, had resolved that she should never enjoy the fortune, whatever " the law " ordered ; so he had realized all that he could of it, nearly the whole, in notes of the Bank of England, Dresdener Bank, Bank of France, mostly £1,000 English notes, all which he had brought with him in a common card-board box, and had lately buried hardly half a yard deep on the east side of the well beside his hut, together with the photograph stolen by him from the Queen.

"And *you* shouldn't have it, baas," he said to Cobby, "if I wasn't sure that you'll never get that bitch to go with you. If the dead can bring evil upon the living—*hic !*—I'll bring it upon her : hateful cat, I never hated as I hate that cat. And tell Black Sue, too, to look out : if I can drag the harlot after me, I will, and we'll have it hot down there. And you, too —you struck me—damn you for that, man ; but then you stuck to me—elevated to disdain and aid the hand that aimed at your heart. When you defended me from being brought here, I thought 'I'd like to be cultured and innocent like him.' Now you are a king —rightful—not like me. This is the one kingly thing I ever did, to make you a king. Life ! rum thing. I think if I had it to live again, I'd pan it out different. Science—you are right : that's the thing : I'd train my brain to see God, and be blind to Maxim's. . . . God, it's coming—the deepness of this disease in me—you wouldn't believe, all's wrong in me—oh, won't you give me the revolver ? Cobby *give*—I give you millions, I buy it, that's fair—you prig, you English thing, in spite of science—— Ach, now I got it—by the frantic cross of—— Help ! hell ! . . ." It was noon before Cobby stepped out of "The Elephant" pool, and, instead of then at once hastening to overtake his companies, he, still skulking in this hiding-place from perplexity, decided to go to Macray's hut, where he dug up the box of notes, only to bury it again ; then at last with his guide galloped off for the fighting, knowing of a wild rumour then raging like fire through Eshowe that Daisy had invaded Wo-Ngwanya.

XXXIV

CALAMITY

THE actual possession of "a kingdom"—or empire, say—had an effect upon Cobby's psychology. This wealth, Spiciewegiehotiu's by "law," had, on being so buried, been lost to her as much as if sunk in a ship, a misfortune which, once accomplished, no "law," nor law-officers, can alter. Cobby had recovered it through being what he was: now it was his: and he proceeded to dream dreams. Now he could found and endow in England, now flout the lousy little scowlers at schools and foes of wisdom—was a king with king's counsel as before, but now with six kings' power. This subtly affected him—increased, for one thing, his greed to be gone for England, and to be gone not alone, but with another: for the lucky feel aggrieved if they still need something, and are not completely lucky, as Macray had attempted to kill several "niggers," since he lacked cigars: so now with Cobby. The wings of his new power were an irritant and nuisance to him in that, having them, he was denied the right instantly to fly with them; it was a cross to him that his aeroplane could not take a passenger, so that like a shah of the air he might be off at once with Spiciewegiehotiu: for his seventh million erected him to a Sabbath serenity of establishment and majesty, and the fact that not she, but he, was the millionaire made a chemical change in his relation to her (though he would have denied), promoted him to a new dominance and authority, hardened his heart (though he would have denied): and whereas he had decided to fight for her against Sebingwe, though not against Daisy, he now decided to fight against no one. "Her

own fault," he said: "if she must fall, she must: then to comfort her."

He made no great haste to "the front": after galloping some way through a gale, went slow. . . .

That morning of storm the Wo-Ngwanya army, after crossing the frontier northward into Wo-Mashenya territory, had come into touch with the enemy; then had smartly marched back for Wo-Ngwanya: upon which Sebingwe, a lean colossus, with a renown for feats of prowess and conduct in war, had hotly followed.

There is a valley a mile wide, quite flat, lying within hills white atop with dolomite—hills east, west and south—and on it two woods within which are villages, round these being fields of millet, dark-green maize, groundnuts; and, flowing northward close under the west hills, the river Perihompya, a home of hippos: in which valley, called Spicieweija, or White Valley, Sebingwe caught up Spiciewegiehotiu, and a battle was fought.

Spiciewegiehotiu having there spent the previous day, her reason for advancing and then retreating, drawing Sebingwe after her, was that the battle-field might be one which *she* had chosen; moreover, since, to her astonishment and dismay, the rifles had not arrived, she desired to delay the engagement, and, awaiting their arrival, only engaged the foe when forced to.

The battle began about noon, Sebingwe, with his son, anon watching it from an ant-heap at the valley's centre, and anon himself speeding like the storm with an *umkonto*, or broad spear (for stabbing), on a frantic little horse which, with prancings and kickings like a rocking-horse, snatched him off into the throng of things; while Spiciewegiehotiu sat at the doorway of a hut built on piles in some timber nigh the southern hills, her feet planted on the back of her Selim, she munching nuts with her molars, anon calling something to a knot of men who stood close below her, anon using her field-glass, ever engaged in trying to keep her thighs modestly covered, for the storm wafted

all below, as above its blasts wafted streams of green pigeons gadding, streams of black geese voyaging, from which far aloft noised down callings, voices as of laughter and roistering at the vastness of their hilarity, at the excess of their heaven, the milk of the Kingdom of their elysium ; and down anon washed a shower, sharp and short, adding to freshness and strangeness of wind freshness and strangeness of water, during which the two war-hosts fought on in a home of " holy haze " of Homer, which the gaze failed to investigate.

Spiciewegiehotiu wantonly munched nuts with her molars, constantly covered her legs with her reluctant kaross, which, pegged to one leg, got fluttering free from the other in a frolic of mockery, she recovering a knee, it recovering freedom to stream and strum ; and she sent messages to a group a few hundred yards nearer the struggling hosts ; and she laughed a little with the winds, and with her staff of officers ; for, accustomed since the age of twelve to watch and estimate battles, she was in her element, had a certain joy in battle, like a person employed with confident competence on work which in early boyhood was his choice and hobby ; and, though annoyed, disappointed, perplexed, at the non-arrival of the rifles, she expected them, every few minutes throwing her eye to see the rifles come through a declivity of the southern hills to her right.

Sebingwe, for his part, had some rifles, and was firing them : so, though the Wa-Ngwanya were in rather greater number, for some time the struggle remained indecisive, until Spiciewegiehotiu gave an order in the midst of a storm of rain, whereupon a fleet of tree-trunks, cut down the previous day, rushed down the river, taking a regiment. To her the *mind*, or *morale*, of fighters was always a matter of high importance, she having no small confidence in the effect of astonishment and shock upon the mentality of men locked in conflict : nor in this case was she mistaken. The river having high sides, calcarious tufa on clay shale, with mimosa bush at its edges, the

regiment floated a long way down before it was noted, and its advent upon the flank of the conflict produced, if not a rout, a profound result. When the rain-storm wandered off elsewhither, Spiciewegiehotiu, gazing through her glass at the struggle, muttered to herself : " Sebingwe done."

This, however, was not what she wanted—wanted the war to be won by the rifles and machine-gun : and now occurred in her a tug-of-war between two alternatives—to win at once—or to wait for the rifles, and have all as she had planned it. Estimating close and careful, her judgment held the scales ; and on the jump of this pull of judgment hung her doom. At this time no sign of any danger from Daisy had arisen on her horizon—no tinge of suspicion of such a thing—or there would have been no indecision : she would pretty surely have whipped Sebingwe at once, and then Daisy, in detail. Still, she decided rightly : to fight out the fight now ; but then in a minute went white at a fresh decision, dropped in an impulse upon her horse, and dashed off herself to the general staff, to order a retreat to be beaten.

It seemed to all that some fly had stung her ! When all along the battle-front the Wo-Ngwanya drums began to thump retirement, everyone was surprised, none more than Sebingwe, who, already in retreat, readily enough permitted the retreat of his enemy, and quickly became pigmy northward.

Then two hours passed. The " doctors " were over the wounded, rank-and-file were setting up a stockade, the Queen with her staff was seated at a meal of goat on the ground under her hut, the sun at three o'clock flying white to treat with mobs of on-coming storm-cloud, when a horse bathed in sweat came tearing through the southern hills.

The rider brought the tidings that the army of M'Niami was marching upon Eshowe. . . .

" You mad, no, man ? " Spiciewegiehotiu asked him ; and tasted no more food that day.

And she asked : " You see the rifles coming ? "

To which he answered that the rifles were not far beyond the hills.

She stood up then to move slowly away into the wood in a world that had turned turtle, dizzied, incapable of belief, of disbelief, of any realization. Her lips breathed " Sueela " . . .

She ran back presently to give an order as to two regiments left in Eshowe, to bid them rush to her, then again walked out to be alone.

XXXV

CRASH

NOW she saw the rifles arrive, but could not descry Cobby; saw a rifleman making enquiries as to her whereabouts, and then racing toward her. She ran, calling to him: "Me here!" and before he could speak asked: "Where Sir Cobby is?"

"Sir Cobby not with us, Bayeté," he said: "the Guardian of the Sad send to tell Sir Cobby Sir Caray dying——"

Her eyes closed in pain.

"Then Sir Cobby go back. He say he come on later . . . You hear, Bayeté, about Daisy?"

"Yes. Have you with you a kind of stand-up gun from Sir Cobby's waggons?"

"No, Bayeté, nothing: only rifles."

"Sir Cobby have with him that kind of gun?"

"No, Bayeté, nothing: only his rifle."

"Oh, but you sure?" she asked with appeal.

"Bayeté, me sure!"

Silence; her gaze on the ground; then suddenly: "Why you so late?"

He answered: "Yesterday from morning to noon we not march; we stand still. Everybody wait: Sir Cobby not give any order."

"*Why* he not give any order?"

"Bayeté, me not know!"

"What Sir Cobby doing all that time?"

"He sit alone on a stone and smoke."

A rush of blood flushed her brow; she screamed at him: "Go way!"

Presently she let herself drop down within an old matsura tree-trunk, where she sat paralyzed a long

time, while messengers of Job on blown horses washed in foam, messenger after messenger, came upon her, to declare how Daisy was there or was there, was firing kraal after kraal with frantic licence, was driving the affrighted tribesmen into wildness of flight before his unbridled hordes, was twenty miles from Eshowe—not Daisy himself, it appeared, who was said to be sick, but his Queen Sueela, a Wo-Ngwanya damsel! who was in supreme command; and three Wo-Ngwanya headmen had thrown-in their lot with her, taking oath to make her sovereign of Wo-Ngwanya: so, they said, reported the droves of fugitives flocking to refuge in Eshowe. . . .

Spiciewegiehotiu in a steady way for a long while kept on striking the tree-trunk within which she hid with the tip of one of the horns of her horned forehead, her eyeballs all distraught like the orb of the bison's eye, like the bull's, that, horning for fun and butting's sake, broods with his orbs distraught; and afterwards she struck matches, match after match prodigally, watching them glow, or puffed by the gusts, nothing left in her but mechanism and mechanical action; but when only two matches were left she put back the box at her waist, and—leapt up to act.

The question with her now was: Did Sebingwe know? Daisy might be acting either alone, or in league with Sebingwe: if alone, if Sebingwe did not know, she might patch up a peace with Sebingwe, be off to smash Daisy, then be back like tempest upon Sebingwe.

At eight in the night an envoy of five left her for Sebingwe. She desired, she said, no more fighting, was tired of fighting, as Sebingwe could see for himself from the withdrawal that morning of her warriors in the thick of their victory: so for a nominal indemnity of five hundred, if Sebingwe desired, she was ready to be friends.

At midnight came the embassy back. Sebingwe had singed off the head-ring of one of its members, and had sent the message: He was willing to treat; but

let the Queen come to him herself; and she must make every step of the way on her knees.

At which Spiciewegiehotiu flinched with a twist of the shoulders in protest, as from a blow; but some moments afterwards an arc-lamp, both hot and bright, arose in her eyes, a blighting pride; and "Ah!" she muttered, "it was Death made him say that, and he not know it: to-day he done seeing the sun go down."

Her will now was to crush Wo-Mashenya quickly with the first blinks of the sun, then swiftly to turn about and burst in wrath upon M'Niami, wresting success out of the very mouth of calamity by mere dazzlement of nimbleness and incredibility of briskness. That night she did not sleep; neither, though her fighters slept well, did the fighters of Sebingwe sleep, she launching upon them no less than five separate surprise-attacks by small bodies, to keep them touchy and jumpy, and cause them to be seedy in the morning.

And before morning broke she had before her under her hut forty line-regiment giants and forty rifle-men, whom she informed of the message which Sebingwe had sent her; and she said: "Me wonder which of you is to avenge me?—which one it is who is to kill Sebingwe? Me will *love* that fellow."

But no battle began at sunrise, as she had planned: for Sebingwe, knowing that Daisy was pelting to his aid, fled to await him, and it was afternoon before the Wa-Ngwanya, hotly following northward, forced him to a conflict.

But by then he was behind a stockade previously built by him on the north brink of the Pirihompya, which, in that region, flows eastward: and in fording the stream, and in forcing the screen, hosts of the Queen's heroes reeled, as in the season when trees waste their leaves, fleets of the slain sailing away to sea with the waves. Nothing, though, could check the Wa-Ngwanya; this fight was for wife and child; they saw Spiciewegiehotiu horsed in the throng of it all, in peril, anon pointing a revolver to protect her-

self ; and they fought as the tide rises, and as the reaper strides, the rifles reaping a rood of life, and the spears no pruning-hooks, but scythes.

Hell howling deluged and rushed the stockade, and thenceforth it was a case of crush, hand-to-hand battle, eyeball-to-eyeball stabbing, and backward stepping for Sebingwe, who himself quickly ceased to witness it when a steadfast wedge of twenty, having forged a way toward him through floods of blood, and having bulleted him dead through the breast, got at him like dogs, and angrily gashed his body to strawberry-hash : off then gadded his head through the throng for a flag, aloft on an assegai. When his son, Nasandhlwana, took the command, the Wa-Mashenya were already in pretty steep retreat, and from his horseback Cobby, who had but now arrived, saw with his heart in his mouth through darkling twilight and driving squall the sight of the Queen, horse and all, being swept forward, as it seemed, by the momentum of the sweep of her teeming men.

He was on the point of pelting that way, when he caught the noise of a spattering tramp of cavalry on sloppy soil, sounding louder and louder from the south, then a howling of a multitude of mouths, and now was aware of the legs of galloping nags making a palisade that came far-spread across the breadth of the plain, so that he and his guide had to gallop aside, flying from being rushed by this eruption of eyeballs, on all these horsemen's heads being a helmet of hide having a horn of the ibex at the front, and the roughness of their bawling, and the assault of their irruption, helped these horns to make them horsemen of hell ; and on a tall horse in a group galloping at the back of the troop was a woman, whom Cobby, though he could not see, assumed to be Sueela on her Mustapha.

Ten minutes later they might have come too late : as it was, like the shock and rumpus of the archangel's trump came that irruption upon their enemy. Notwithstanding that they were but a van, that they were under two thousand in number, just the jump and

wonderment of their coming won. Rot followed; and now rout: for at once the ranks of Nasandhlwana rallied; and, distracted, the Wa-Ngwanya scattered and ran.

The Queen being near a path, and divining with her eye in the half-dark that far and wide her army was squeezing itself into flight, as near her it was squeezing itself, trampling itself, every man for himself, she fled, or rather let herself be swept away by pressure along this path westward; and presently found herself bounding along a road with about forty of her own horses round her.

Soon, however, these were pursued, as they could see in the sheen of a moon just come up, to illumine somewhat the drearness and gloom of an evening which the gale anon washed with torrents of rain; and when the pursuers proved to be M'Niami troops, the Wa-Ngwanya, who, though they hanker after M'Niami women, scorn M'Niami men, asked Spiciewegiehotiu if they should stop and fight to cover her flight; to which, glancing back at the troop of pursuers, she replied: "No, they can't catch me on Selim: you all get killed, if you fight," and the flight continued another minute, until some one of the M'Niami, firing a wanton rifle, shot a Mo-Ngwanya; upon which, with one thought, all the Wa-Ngwanya halted, threw their horses round, and flew to do and die fighting.

But Spiciewegiehotiu, hardly bothering to glance behind at them, kept straight on at the same pace, she cared not whither, not wishing for bed nor bread, only for some cave or shed within which to bury away her head, and throw her shame; and, seeing her keep on, Cobby, following after her in the M'Niami troop, threw his animal aside into wild mimosa-land to avoid the oncoming Wa-Ngwanya, then, galloping full bat, regained the road half a mile behind the Wa-Ngwanya, now fighting hand-to-hand with the M'Niami.

As she had not been conscious of his solitary pur-

suit through the bush, he rushed out upon the road hardly four hundred yards from her, on which, though he was under trees, she immediately knew him by his Ali's hoofs, their ponderous roll prattling like drumsticks upon the mud, knew him likewise by instinct of the eye, while he through drizzle could distinctly see her hair heavy with wet hanging half-lax on her back, could see her lean to her Selim's ear to bid him flee, and now could see her mouth wide with laughing when she twisted smartly to fire twice at him.

"*Shame!*" he passionately shouted at her, his head now down to his animal's mane.

And a third time he saw her turn and fire her revolver with wrathful laughter, and now for some moments lost himself, then refound himself down on the ground, dismounted over his horse's head, which had foundered, shot in the shoulder.

As he started up, a small squad of M'Niami dashed past him after Spiciewegiehotiu, who had vanished; and when he made an attempt to follow them, his horse went tame and lame. So he turned back, observing now vultures gathering like guests to supper from every direction of heaven, and presently saw some hundred bodies blocking the road, with their guns, assegais, kerries, and three lynxes among them, with a company of vultures crammed with man, philanthropists at a symposium that only the moon looked at, musing over that lonesome moorland. All the Wa-Ngwanya had apparently fallen in the fracas, half as many more of the M'Niami, and, lying dead among the dead of man and nag, Cobby saw his guide. Nags were everywhere neighing, and presently, as he went, he began to see them running wild, singly and in groups, fleeing from the big battle; and soon began to meet man—on foot—single—in twos and threes—teeming in groups and troops, multitudinous, streaming, fleeing from the stricken field, keen to be away anywhere, tearing along followed by their plumes and loose uniforms in the teeth of flaw and murky turmoil, bent beneath burdens of inclemency

and immensity of adversity, but trotting steadily on and on, throwing anon an eye behind where hopelessness was, as before them homelessness ; and with a sore in his bosom, with a hung head, Cobby moved slowly onward on a horse whose head was not less hung and heavy. . . .

As to Spiciewegiehotiu, she sought shelter after midnight at the kraal of a headman named Moocrya, who pretended to be an independent chief, but paid tribute to Sebingwe. He gave her food, fodder, put her into a hut near him, and she, sleepless for two days, was soon swooning to sleep.

With one ear open, however. Before long she was conscious of noises, nocturnal voices—a party of M'Niami urging upon the chief the need, for his skin's good, to give her up : so, her Selim being near her, she went stealing out, called him soft, vaulted upon him, and was off.

But she was hardly half-way down the kotla when, an alarm having been raised by a watch posted there, shots and horses were following her ; on which she, not aware that they were under orders not to harm her, and were aiming at her horse's quarters, caught at a limb of a tree in an impulse and clinging to life, though she longed to die ; and the light was so dim, that they lost her, and, unconscious that she was in the tree, sprinted past her, continuing to follow the horse a little, until they could descry that it was riderless, and then stood at a loss.

Selim, however, revealed her—to his own undoing : for he soon came trotting back with neighs to the tree : upon which she, seeing them pelting for her, dropped upon him, dreading death less than shame, and, facing them, was away again for the gate, firing the final shot of her revolver.

Now, however, her Selim fell over her, pierced ; and ere she could free herself from him, she was a prisoner.

XXXVI

QUEEN SUEELA

TWO afternoons afterwards Cobby, wandering solitary for Eshowe through forested hill-country on his limping mount, which limped constantly sicker, encountered a mob of Wa-Mashenya Tommies shouting song on their way northward from Eshowe, who informed him that they had met travelling from the west a party of M'Niami who had Spiciewegiehotiu a captive with them, and were conveying her to Eshowe, which was in flames.

Cobby's eye lightened, and he flogged his horse to be on; but Ali could only go slow. Even here nags were to be seen which appeared to be runaways from the Battle of the Pirihompya, but they all avoided capture, nor in all this part of Wo-Ngwanya, where all the hamlets had been abandoned, could he get a nag; so that he felt "my 'kingdom' for a horse," and thought of rushing on foot to Eshowe—which, in truth, if he had known more, he would have done.

Eshowe, as the Wa-Mashenya had reported, was then in flames, and even from the remote end of "The Elephant" at eight that evening the ex-Queen was able to observe in the clouds the brown and frown of its burning. And it was through fires that she drew nigh to it—camp-fires of hosts of Wa-Mashenya, of hosts of M'Niami, regiment after regiment, of each of which, when she moved near it, she knew the name by the make and scheme of its shield—all this panorama of camp-fires, wafted by winds under the wings of a falcon of sparks and smoke bound darkling south from the roaring town, being imbrued with the luridness and wrath of a drama from Tartarus. As for the people of Eshowe, these, as usual in such cases there,

had all flung their all upon the altar of God, and gone headlong in flight to hide or die.

When Spiciewegiehotiu was conducted up the hot kotla, which was encumbered with soldiers, there on the platform at the top was seated Sueela in the stone throne, surrounded by about a hundred M'Niami; Mandaganya, her mother, not there; none of her own people; but among the M'Niami priests and heralds, who, some minutes previously, had been proclaiming her Queen of Eastern Wo-Ngwanya, she being barbarously garbed with a broad gaudiness, bedizened with ornaments of gold and stones, a Queen, enthroned, reclined, serene, smiling an evil smile, attired in a kaross long to the ankles, yellow with black elephants, a dress of Spiciewegiehotiu's, and from her helmeted head vaulted enormous horns, upon whose reds and browns of ochre shone a crowd of torches brawling about her.

At sight of Spiciewegiehotiu she half started up, but then smartly sat again; and, beckoning to one of the captor-group to gallop to her, got from him the details of the capture before Spiciewegiehotiu, having been unbound, was hoisted off a horse, and stood before the platform. The two then looked at each other; and said Sueela, smiling: "Well, Spiciewegiehotiu? You see."

Sueela had drunk blood, was fresh from orgy, and something or other in her air was very strange, debauched, and raw, across her forehead being scrawled, as it were, "Babylon, mother of harlots." Just the fact that she had stabbed in the back her country, so beloved, that she was everywhere execrated, her soul in hell, had been the cause that she had broken loose, gone the whole hog, so that more had fled and bled and blazed before the march of her devastation than if any male had led the army of M'Niami, for at the drunkenness of the rumbling of the drums up in her blood had flashed the savage, flashing the eye of riot and rapine, and, mixed with the blood of massacre, had been quaffed other liquor, and liquor of

lips, she, stark and staring, dancing distracted cancans in revels of shamelessness, shaking frenzy from her hair, demanding the man-in-the-moon and more-than-man to manage her. The burning of Eshowe might well have been averted by a word of hers ; but she had done nothing : only the ground round about the sigodhlo—that spot, that cloister—holy of holies to her bosom—home of her youth—she had rescued and protected, as she could, the storm being from the north.

And revealing her teeth, sneering, she said with levity to Spiciewegiehotiu : " You marry me to Daisy, no ? You see now. You not always clever ! You not see everything ! Other girls clever, too ! "

A statue stood there the defeated Queen, hard, calm, marble, rain-streams rambling down the rampart of her face, her hair relaxed, and to nothing she gave answer, her gaze meditating steadily upon the other.

And Sueela, sneering, with levity : " Now you go to your own country, no ? Me give you Sir Cobby. He mad after me, me can have him, but me not want him : me married ; me good."

No answer : Spiciewegiehotiu's eyes now clandestinely estimating her chances of attack and escape.

And Sueela : " Where Sir Cobby is ? You see him anywhere when he follow you from the battle ? "

No answer : only Spiciewegiehotiu's lip curved a little, shivered a little as it curved, she thinking of Cobby dead by her hand, having dimly witnessed his fall from his horse.

And Sueela, with sneering teeth : " You think me care whether you answer me or no ? You nobody now, my girl. You soon go off to your own country, nobody care, me not care. You marry me to Daisy : now me Queen of half Wo-Ngwanya, of all M'Niami ; me have other things to think about than Spiciewegiehotiu."

At this point Spiciewegiehotiu, having watched for a chance, snatched the spear of the officer nearest

her, and, leaping, was on the platform in rapid career to stab Sueela.

But a shout broke out, and she just failed by a foot, four soldiers throwing themselves over her, shaking her, pouring over her a coal-sack of French and tongue ; and, panting and captive, she stood among them, till Sueela, leaping up drew a knife from her waist, and stood with her, saying to the men : " Go away—leave her," and to Spiciewegiehotiu, sneering, revealing her teeth : " You want to kill me, no ? But the spear too heavy : that why you fail ; take this knife."

She held it out.

" Me *do* it," Spiciewegiehotiu mentioned, not taking it.

" Well, *do* it : here's a knife for you, my girl,"

Spiciewegiehotiu took the knife.

" Now," Sueela said, baring her breasts ; and tense stood the spectators of it with staring eyes, while Spiciewegiehotiu eyed her up and down, down and up, with a malign eye.

" Nobody to touch her when she do it ! " Sueela flung aside from her ; adding : " Now, my girl."

Spiciewegiehotiu's lip was curved at dirt ; but the stroke did not come.

" What, you not do it ? " said Sueela with levity, with sneering teeth : " You 'fraid, no ? What you have to be 'fraid of ? 'Fraid to strike your—friend ? " —her voice on a sudden broke.

" Slut," said Spiciewegiehotiu.

" Yes, me bad, Spiciewegiehotiu—eheh, me *baad* —but me not so bad as God and the devils think me."

Now her face went aside to hide what welled in her eyes ; at the same time Spiciewegiehotiu's face convulsed one moment, and now, dropping the knife, off she rushed to drop from the platform at a point rather empty of men, and, dodging capture, was gone, all legs, devouring the ground, down the kotla's length.

" What she going to do ? " started out of Sueela's mouth : " *catch* her ! " upon which immediately a

mob of people at full speed were in pursuit, and in a few moments more in pursuit, too, was Sueela, who, in leaping, threw off her kaross, and, using that extreme freedom and fleetness of her feet, was soon leading the stream of pursuers, and stealing surely upon the fugitive.

But she was chasing a fox: though the kotla was populous with soliders, and Sueela thrice cried out "Stop her!" to people ahead, Spiciewegiehotiu, herself fleet of foot, dodged them in detail, as she could, the moon's light being very obscured by the tempest and tenebrous mood of the night, and by that roof of smoke that rolled over all, so that all occurred as in some vault of murk and Orcus; moreover, when the ex-Queen, who, running south, had steered her feet east, too, rushed upon a bridge of "The Gut," a big baobab close to the bridge hid her for some moments, and when the foremost pursuer followed upon the bridge, she was no longer on it: they saw only her horned helmet and kaross going down "The Gut" in the shine of huts on fire beyond: at sight of which Sueela cried out: "She going down 'The Gut'!" and, seeking her, peering, the pack ran down the stream, which, in its passage through the town, is narrow and rapid.

But, in fact, Spiciewegiehotiu was going *up* "The Gut" after lingering a little in the dark under the bridge, and after swimming with difficulty a little up and across, to emerge in singed mimosa on the deserted east shore, up which in a purgatory of heat and reek she sprinted, until she got to the spot where the river runs under the stockade; and it was still with a sort of official shock that she saw no watchman there; whence she made her way up into the wilds on the brink of White River.

XXXVII

BELLADONNA

UP there she remained a long time, anon catching sight of parties rambling far and wide with lights to find her. It was after midnight when she went back to Eshowe, bent with fatigue, weary of being, in her fingers a sprig of a tree rare there, the deadly-nightshade which she had fled to find.

Slowly over the kotla her footsteps moved, unnoticed, M'Niami troops being addicted to liquor, and most of the slumberers drunk. After passing through the sigodhlo gate, where no guard was, she saw at the gate of the royal grounds two guards, prostrate dogs, with a gourd of strychnia liquor close, and her lip a little scorned the mood of the new governing. She passed up the avenue, her object now being to burn Cobby's waggons before going along that path which she purposed : for, Cobby dead, as she thought, and she intending to follow that way, she did not want his belongings to be left in hands alien and profane ; and as, besides, she thought that the Wa-Ngwanya in the North might some time rise and fight, she did not desire that Sueela, who had seen the machine-gun fired, should have it to aim against them.

Soft and slow she paced, could see that the hut was occupied—a slight escape of light at the door—but ventured to stop, and drop, and prop her heavy head upon that door, which she had known as home since the age of seven ; where, seated with shut eyes, drearily she smiled at dribble beating her, at the bravura of that *froufrou* of breezes trooping with whoops through the multitudinous wood, as a woman whoops out with frolic when a flaw swoops-up her frocks : smil-

ing steadily, as one may grin and grin and be a death's-head ; no sob, nor salt in her tears of dribble ; prepared to pay and bear, not having " seen everything," having committed what, to her, was the one Sin—faulty polity, wrong conduct, trust in others just because she loved them, and thought that they loved her, uncircumspect seeing, purblind business, infirm building ; and then the destined tendency in events, star of disaster : hating herself and That which Makes, she disdained to make complaint.

She heard a word or two murmured within the hut, then stillness, then a word or two, and stillness ; then, presently, the breath of a sniff close inside, then a " *whoof !* " sounded, and understood that it sounded from Mandaganya's little dog, Ronja : upon which she sprang upright, and was gone for the grove where the waggons were.

The night, though so wild, being still white, one could see : and after collecting into little heaps what was left of the leaves that had been heaped by her men under the waggons, she went to a shed into which the fuel-wood had been flung when she had run to tell the men to remove the fuel-heaps from under the waggons, so that Cobby might not see them ; and from the shed she fetched armful after armful of wood to deposit in good order as fuel-heaps under the waggons.

After which, taking a match-box out of a little charm-box at her moocha-waist, she looked into it—two matches only.

And, cautious as she was, the wind whiffed out one : upon which she spread a bit of tarpaulin from a waggon upon a waggon-wheel that faced the gale, and, kneeling near behind, got a few leaves alight, flew to the fuel-heap near, and, using that magic of savages in lighting fires, soon had the fuel-heap sounding, fuming, sloping south, an opal flowing.

Bent under the waggon, she stood waiting for the blaze to get well going, before taking brand from it to make the other blazes, her eyes now lowered to

rest on her sprig of belladonna, while a vitagraph of the story of her life unrolled itself before her memory —scenes from the Second and Third M'Niami Wars, her *coup d'état* and leap to the throne, the execution of the princes, the coming of Rolls, then of Macray, of Cobby . . . she shrugged, and moved to get the brand.

But for some time before this, ever since his "*whoof!*" at the hut-door, the little dog of Mandaganya had been very restless, as dogs will be a little before being poisoned or blown to the clouds; and "What the matter with him?" Mandaganya had demanded of Sueela, with whom she was keeping vigil, all at a loss and in dismay and mourning over that homeless head of Spiciewegiehotiu; and at last when the little Ronja had persisted in scratching at the door, when she had let him out, and he had rushed off, then had come back to invite her with insistence to go with him, she, ever inclined to scent "second-sight" in him, went with him.

Now he gamboled gladly, and, nose to ground, soon had her dragged to the waggons, whereupon she, catching sight of fire, and nothing to explain it, for Spiciewegiehotiu had fled a little way, instinctively snatched up a branch, and dashed at the brands, to lash and shatter.

Upon which Spiciewegiehotiu, standing now outside that waggon, smiled and shrugged, muttering: "Even in this me fail."

At the same time Mandaganya turned to the little dog to demand of it: "*How* you know that there was a—— ?" but now heard a twig snap under a step, glanced that way, and became conscious of Spiciewegiehotiu beyond the waggon.

A cry broke from her: "*My darling!*"—and she ran.

But Spiciewegiehotiu ran from her round the waggon, she after, crying out through the barking of the dog: "You run from *me?*"

"Good-bye, Mandaganya!" called Spiciewegie-

hotiu, laughing, popping some of the belladonna berries into her mouth.

"*Oh, God!*" Mandaganya gasped, all aghast, pursuing her round the waggon, having soon noted in the moonlight the sprig in her fingers, and known of what tree of groaning that fruit grew.

And back she doubled short upon the fugitive; but Spiciewegiehotiu doubled, too, stopping an instant to peep mischievously round a corner of the waggon, laughing, exhibiting how she crammed more of the berries into her mouth, then afresh was away.

And, "Oh, you wicked thing!" panted Mandaganya, trotting in heavy haste, all pants and gasps, and breasts in distress for breath; and when again at the next corner Spiciewegiehotiu stopped to peep, and laugh, and exhibit, "Oh, you spiteful thing!" Mandaganya gasped: "you not love Mandaganya? Oh, you ungrateful thing!" and so round, with doublings-back and dodgings, they rushed, and narrow escapes of Spiciewegiehotiu, and laughs, and pantings of the heart, till Spiciewegiehotiu stopped to lay her head on a corner, and was caught.

No syllable now uttered the sybil, but, getting firm hold, picked up and bore the girl on her powerful bosom, a moan sounding out of her mouth.

So Spiciewegiehotiu presently lay on her own old bed of skins betwixt the two roof-trees of red mopane-wood, she rapidly flushing, to pink, to red, to crimson, while a wild silence reigned, the sybil with fixed lips administering some one of the herbal simples borne at her girdle in little gourds, though, in truth, the globe held no hellebore that could now heal the hell of that heat and fever, or ward off the mortal hour—except morphia, the antidote of atropa, a fact of which, probably, the doctoress lacked all knowledge; and anon that laughter of atropa, half-hearted, starting up exclamatory, languidly dropping off, as in languid mockery of the cosmos, started up from the unconscious form, and dropped off, while Sueela, revealing her teeth in a rictus of the lips, sat a picture of horror,

her back propped upon a pillar, her fingers outstuck stiff, a downlooking craze in her gaze that gloated as on gulfs of destruction and groaning. Only one outcry to Heaven she made: "Oh, where Sir Cobby is? If he was here, he never let her die like this!"—she having no knowledge of Cobby's halt horse, shot by Spiciewegiehotiu.

Only Mandaganya, after an hour, spoke: spoke on and on in a low tone, crooning over the crimson delirium and derision of the fever's dreaming. "My lamb. No father, no mother, only me; lost in Africa; and she put up such a fight against it, and beat it; and now it beat her; this is what she was to come to; there she lie; my white lamb. Me bring forth fourteen sons, and me love them all, but only now me know, my God, how cruel a mother's bowels can rue—my mangled lamb—poor mute ewe—if Mandaganya's bosom could ooze blood that'd do you good, she'd drench you redder yet than you be, stretched there . . . She laugh . . . She laugh to pass out of the dirty world. . . . You wanted to be a Queen, no?"—to Sueela, with a nod—"Queen of Wo-Ngwanya, no? And this is what you bring her to. What sort of a Queen? You think you can put on her shoes, and rule men as she rule them? A little bastard like you? She pick you up out of the ditch, a little bastard, she clasp you to her breast, she tell you Me-and-you, and this is what you bring her to. Oh, high Heaven, that bella in her belly bite her bitter, but it bite her never a bit so bitter as the unremembrance of that bitter breast must have bit her. If you wanted——"

"Oh, Ma-Sueela"—from Sueela, irritated to speech at last—"me not answer you! If you not know that me love Spiciewegiehotiu more than my own self, you mad! you mad! you mad!"

Up started the dreamer's laughter, half-hearted-exclamatory, and fainted away.

And quietly the sybil: "Don't you answer me back; don't you say 'mad' to me. Say it again, just

to see what happen to you. Me owe you a drubbing as it is, my lady. You think me not hear about your carryings-on since the war started ? You think so ? If me was that fool of a Daisy me'd cut off your right leg, and then cut off your left arm, to balance you. You think——"

But now on a sudden two wild eyeballs intruded into the doorway, and the light flickered upon the axe of Sandelikatze, Sueela's whole-brother, the executioner, who, though like his other brothers he had shaken the dust of Eshowe off his shoes, and was a fugitive, had stolen back to use his axe : and "*where she ?*" started from his lips, as in darted his limber limbs.

Doubtless, if she had fled, that would have been her death-hour, but, as she never stirred, her unconcern may have somewhat perturbed his nervous pose, and the next moment he got a cuff on the jaw which sent him staggering, from Mandaganya, who said to him, "You mad, no ?" and cast the axe out of door.

On which he stepped with stiff fingers to strangle his sister, but in the midst of a cataract of invective saw Spiciewegiehotiu, and now profoundness of ruth modified the mood of his rage, he rushing to kneel and moan and hold her hand to his cheek ; and after half an hour he was induced to take himself away, his mother having made a rendezvous with him in a wood.

Then fifteen minutes more of that vigil over the dying, and then the eyes of Cobby, just arrived at Eshowe, were prying in, he at once conscious of atropa, the scarlet, the laughter . . . And sore now his heart smote him and smarted, a lamentable outcry clamouring out of his bosom : "Now, Almighty God, help me, have pity . . ." and in some moments he had her, trotting ponderously with her down the avenue for his hut, followed by Mandaganya and Sueela fluttering, and before long had her blood saturated with sulphate of morphia.

XXXVIII

REINSTATEMENT

THE vitality of Spiciewegiehotiu rallied the following afternoon; and the next forenoon her eyes opened with sight, and saw Cobby alive at her side.

Then, laid in Cobby's deck-chair, she spent days of silence, smiling, pallid now, though the backs of her hands remained of that hue named by Herbert Spencer "impure purple."

She saw Sueela come and go, saw her seated on the floor with her head leant upon Cobby, her eyes closed, "clothed and in her right mind" at Cobby's side; saw Mandaganya come and go; let Cobby hold her hand; but made no remark; hardly replied to anything: none knew her mind.

But during the fifth forenoon, lying outside the hut-door, she suddenly wished to know of Cobby: "Why you bring me back from the dead?"

"Aren't you glad like us others?" he asked.

She shrugged; glanced up at the glorious day; said: "The sun good. But you think me going to live? Me down; me dead; me done. My friends fail me; they plot together against me; and me not suspect it—God take away my understanding."

Cobby gently answered: "What you say is very wrong: Sueela loves you with the whole of her pure soul, and the stupendous thing which she has done she has done for you, in consequence of my having persuaded her that that would be for your good, if you came with me to England. As to my failing you, I shall explain to you the fix I was in, and you will see why I *could* not go into battle against Sueela's men: then you will repent bitterly of having shot bullets at

my life, which is your life, and of attempting to take your life which is my life."

She shrugged. "Me down; me done. Me done loving; me done hating."

"You don't love *me?*"

"No."

"Oh, but that's nonsense; you do."

She was silent; but presently said: "Maybe me live. The sun good. They have much wind in that country you come from? Maybe me go with you to that country. They say you save my life: now me your cow. Throw me into any old hut in that country."

"No!"—he kissed her kaross—"I have decided: you shall not come perforce. I go alone—in a few days—dreadfully desolate, irretrievably bereaved—but I go, after having restored you to the throne from which I have helped to dethrone you."

Now her eyes moved round to him. "Restore?"

"Yes."

"How you——?" But now her interest in his statement failed, she letting her head drop despondently and, moving it slowly, muttered: "Me down. Maybe they rise in The North; but they never swear by Spiciewegiehotiu any more. Me down, me done."

He put his lips on her hand, saying: "On the contrary, you are up—higher than you ever were. I only pray of you that in future, for my sake, in remembrance of me, you will not be always making war upon your neighbours."

"Me?" she muttered, drooping, in that rueing tone of melancholia: "what me have to do with wars? Me done. War good; but it bad, it bad, for them that make it: it's the sons that eat the wheat which the mothers thresh from the breasts they beat."

"Well, if that be really so," he answered, "war is worth the making, for man himself is of no importance, only the son of man. But since you *do* see that war is bad for some—for those very some whom it is the ruler's business to protect—you will not now be too aggressive, and, as for the aggressions of others, I

assure you that for the future no negro will ever dream of daring to molest or offend you."

With fresh interest she sat up at this, saying: "You talk . . . What you can do?"

"I have told Sueela of my decision," he answered: "she will at once withdraw the M'Niami army, and Daisy will pay you a war-indemnity of a thousand. As to Nasandhlwana, I am now about to order him to withdraw, and to pay a war-indemnity of four thousand——"

At this she laughed out a little, saying: "Nasandhlwana laugh!"

"On the contrary," Cobby replied: "he will cry; his head will be waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears—tear-gas will make him sentimental . . . Here comes Sueela: say something to her, for me, will you? Love her again, as she loves you and me."

But to Sueela she had ceased to say anything, and when the next forenoon, which was bright and breezy, a spirit of life pricked her, and the whim sprang in her to go up White River as in glad old times for a bath with five of the sigodhlo Phœbes, Sueela was not invited.

Cobby saw her off from the sigodhlo back—not that he expected any peril for her, though crowds of rowdy troops were everywhere about; and after watching the bevy vanish into the river-bush, went back to his hut, whence he at once sent word in Sueela's name to three colonels of Wo-Mashenya regiments near, requesting them to come to him.

When they had come, he, in the presence of Sueela seated near, listening, chin on fists, made them into an embassy to Nasandhlwana to bear this message:

"Sir Cobby declares to Nasandhlwana that he is a god.

"He can easily destroy Nasandhlwana, his people, his capital, his cattle.

"But since Sir Cobby *looks* like just such a man as Nasandhlwana is, he does not expect Nasandhlwana to credit him with being a god before he proves it.

" So, three noons hence, Sir Cobby will appear in the form of a dove, crooning cooings of thunder, above Kranampya, Nasandhlwana's capital kraal.

" But Sir Cobby is a god who abhors to destroy, unless he is disobeyed. So he is not going to destroy Kranampya, only to destroy so much of it as to show that he could destroy the whole, if he chose.

" Therefore, at that hour the population of Kranampya must evacuate the town, assembling somewhere well outside it. Whoever stays within will die, as all the horses, and kine, and dogs, in it will die. Nor must anyone enter it for some hours after Sir Cobby has come and gone, or he may die. And, as for those assembled outside the town, they will all begin to weep bitter tears, as if all their mothers had died, and some few will be slightly wounded.

" At once after which Nasandhlwana will make haste to withdraw all his men from Wo-Ngwanya territory, and to send four thousand chosen cattle to Queen Spiciewegiehotiu as war-indemnity, and as recompense for the wanton wrong done by Sebingwe, his father, in permitting men of the Wo-Mashenya army to wage war upon Queen Spiciewegiehotiu in her previous war with Daisy."

The three colonels, having heard it with their ears, sat there astare, three different pictures of scare. Blessed is he who hath not seen, and yet hath believed ! and blessed were they.

" Now, pray," Cobby said to the one in the centre, " repeat to me the message."

And that one began : " Sir Cobby say to Nasandhlwana—He God ! He come from Heaven ! Angels his servants ! He can——"

But he was interrupted. Five wild-eyed girls, gasping, burst in, competing in screaming : " *Sueela !* Spiciewegiehotiu—they steal her ! "

All sprang upright, Cobby quite white, none black, to gather presently from the girl's gasps that a gang of some thirty, just as the girls had dressed after bathing,

had burst from bush, snatched up Spiciewegiehotiu, and dashed off with her on mules—north-westward. . . .

Cobby's heart was rent : she still not well. . . .

Who were those men ? Were they M'Niami ? Were they Wa-Mashenya ? The girls could not say.

" They not M'Niami ! " cried out Sueela.

" They not Wa-Mashenya ! cried one of the Wa-Mashenya : " They go on mules ! They Swingoni ! " these Swingoni being tribesmen rather wild and degraded, semi-independent, but paying some tribute to Wo-Mashenya.

But Cobby at once suspected Nasandhlwana, at any rate of connivance, reminded by the event that Sebingwe had once proposed marriage with Nasandhlwana to Spiciewegiehotiu, that Nasandhlwana had desired white, and a white fist Cobby banged at the three Wa-Mashenya, telling them of woe to Wo-Mashenya, if she was not delivered up within five days. " Go ! tell Nasandhlwana this with the rest."

" Wait, me give you my Mustapha ! " Sueela cried, running out with them ; and one on Mustapha flew forerunning the others.

Then followed two days of care for Cobby, he now alone, for, since the aeroplane had to be inspected and prepared, he had been unable to go with Sueela, who had dashed off with cavalry to track the ravishers.

On the second gloaming the aeroplane stood ready at the top of the kotla with a guard of M'Niami round it, and half the night, and all the following morning mobs were filing near to peer at it, all the awna being populous to its bottom : for to farthest M'Niami and Wo-Mashenya the fame of that strange carriage of Cobby's with only two wheels in tandem, and the mad steeds inside, had flown, and it was now assumed that this must be that motor-bicycle, or some other kind of a like thing. But when, an hour before noon, Cobby walked out to it, bounded upon it, the rough row and power of it now fretting every ear, the propeller spinning a mere nebula and remnant of visibility, then were wild eyes intent, the mouth hardly now robbing

from the eye the time to toss a remark aside, or to moisten the lips with spittle ; and now he was dashing over ashes and cinders down the length of the Square, as many thousands now fleeing with screams from before his career as were darting with howling after him, everyone looking to see him go scooting out where the great gates had lately stood ; but when, somewhat before he got half to the market, all at once God took him, and fluttering triumphant he reigned on his throne in the air, then there arose and floated to him a drone of many adoring, and many were felled.

It was the same at Kranampya, a kraal in a charming vale, all orchard, maize and palmyra, and white blossoms of baobab, whither he had twice before ridden ; and, knowing precisely its compass-point, he arrived before noon, spied its folk crowded two miles outside it, and, flying low thrice over it, dropped one high-explosive bomb, four " mustard " gas-shells (di-chlorethyl sulphide), and four chlorines ; then into the nest of kneeling people laid a few " egg-bombs " of tear-gas to make them mourn a little because of him ; and in a little while was taken out of their sight.

But he came down badly, not in Eshowe, but in a meadow, smashing his chassis ; and there in that meadow the monoplane remained, as its wreck may there remain for many a day, a monument of man's mentality immensely more monumental than those remains of ancient " civilizations " which at various places confront one in that country.

XXXIX

THE SWINGONI

WHEN Cobby walked back into Eshowe he found Sueela now there—speechless for grief, she not having succeeded in tracking the gang of ravishers, though she had now discovered that they were, in fact, a gang of the ungoverned Swingoni.

This was soon confirmed by urgent messengers from Nasandhlwana asserting that the guilty ones were Swingoni, who had thus turned to their purpose the turmoil and disturbed condition of things, their motive being to beguile Nasandhlwana into purchasing the white girl, for they had sent him an offer to sell her at a certain spot, and Nasandhlwana was then starting off with half an impi, first to win Spiciewegiehotiu of them by purchase, and then to exterminate them. As to the other demands of Cobby, these were being met.

Such was the message : but for Cobby and Sueela to sit still and wait upon Nasandhlwana's activity was impossible ; therefore, having ascertained the proposed route of Nasandhlwana's party, they started off to come up with it on the motor-bicycle.

They came up with it the same night ; and two nights later arrived at the rendezvous given by the Swingoni —a mountain-road, where, in a grove, four gods of wood stood under four marulas.

When Nasandhlwana had had drums beaten, a drum within the grove answered, and soon two Swingoni appeared, who arranged the details of a meeting to take place the next day between their chief and the King on the brink of the lake beneath.

This lake could be vaguely seen gleaming remotely below in moonlight, a river-like pool, leagues long,

though hardly four hundred yards across; and it was almost known that in the village beyond this Spiciewegiehotiu must be.

So, to be nearer to her, Cobby and Sueela, after the bivouac and a meal, rode down on the motor, some four or five miles, sometimes with tense brakes, to the lake's brink, it being then late toward the midnight of a mild night, benign, sanctified, sighing as in satisfaction and fulfilment, its little breaths brindling that brand of brilliance which bridged the lake's breadth, treading-water within that brand, like rabbles of bathers bathed in beatitude; and for over an hour they two stood there holding the motor, alone, as it were, in the world, though a roof or two looked out through wood across the water; both hushed and mournful; and with a low brow she muttered: "You go—and without her. So all me do me do for nothing. And now she not love me any more."

"Yes, she loves you," he answered, "and will soon forgive fully. She is not quite well yet."

"She in Wo-Ngwanya, me in M'Niami, you gone where the sun set, everything ended. Oh, my, me not want to live; me die: my mother say me born to die young."

"No, no"—he patted her—"you are still a child: life will unfold for you new interests. She will borrow you often from Daisy, and some day *I* may be driven to come again to see her and you."

"It too far," she mourned; "she and me wait, and you not come. If you come, you find me bad. Me bad now. You not—know—what me done since the war. When me close to you me good, but a devil in me."

"Nothing of the sort," he confidently answered: "you are very good, and dear, and pure *au fond*. What you imagine to be a devil is God, who is all in all, and nothing is but Him. Look, the moon, that's He in beauty; and the man-in-the-moon, that's He in buffoonery. And He some day will be perfectly good, I think; and meantime, when He is good, and when

He is bad, is perfectly working . . . What have you done since the war ? "

Her head bent. " Me go crazy, me untrue to you, me dance at you, me spit at you . . ."

" Oh, fie : and at poor Daisy ? "

" Oh, *he*—Eheh."

" Well, then, I am cross. All that is so undistinguished . . . But never mind, forgive Him in you and yourself in Him till seventy times, and ever afresh be trying to be pretty and princely. And when you achieve, that's He succeeding in achieving, and when you fail, that's He succeeding in failing."

" Me remember . . . Me love you too much ! It not love ; me adore the dust you've stood on. And you go . . . you go . . . To-night me tell you goodbye. You owe me one last kiss."

" Yes, the third. But why to-night ? "

" Me not know. Something make me want it now."

Now he put an arm round her, saying : " Very good, come—my dear."

On which, taking his face between her hands, she kissed him long, continently, solemnly, kissing his soul, conscious of the moments, and of long time to come in which those moments would not be ; then cried out " Oh ! " and succumbed to her knees, still holding him.

When he had raised her, they stood side by side in silence, looking over the trail of light on the lake, and that pretty tripping of the ripples within it, like treaders steadily treading water, while the warbling, and warning, of a wedrigo (accent on " *go* " ; sort of owl) sounded out of wood near on their left, until Sueela breathed : " My goodness, that wedrigo . . . sure token of death . . ." and then again breathed : " What that is coming there ? "

Cobby also saw a black object blotching the blaze of the trail on the lake, without comprehension ; but in some moments more Sueela, who was of an extreme keenness of sight, cried out, even as she rushed from

him to plunge into the water: "It is Spiciewegiehotiu! She escape!"

This was so: and before the two heads on the lake met Cobby heard shoutings on the further shore, then saw some thirty canoes, full of pursurers, spurt off . . .

Highly excited, drawing his revolver, he fired at those in the line of light.

This, however, although he emptied his magazine, did not stay any of them, and madly on they came paddling, gaining fast, and presently raining at Cobby arrows which these Swingoni poison with the entrails of the caterpillar n'gwa: so he was soon hiding behind the bicycle, until he hurried with it to the girls, who emerged on the shingle some hundred yards in advance of the Swingoni.

"Fly—they kill——!" Spiciewegiehotiu panted at him, she herself starting off immediately for the timber near.

"No, come! come! the motor!" he called, running some steps after her.

But that might have been well, if he had not interfered; for it appears that she, not aware that help was near her, had carefully concocted her escape, had been conscious that she would be chased, but still had been confident of making safe away within the timber.

He, however, knowing nothing of her plans, could hardly have helped interfering: and she, seeing him and Sueela in a peril which each instant grew while she and he stood arguing, darted to the motor, which immediately started, she between Cobby's arms, Sueela on the carrier.

One minute more and the savages were splashing up to the shore, well left behind, but not afrighted from flying after that marvellous cart that carried off their prize, nor frightened to shoot, since Spiciewegiehotiu, whom they did not want to shoot, was quite covered by the other two.

And presently, with loud mouths of discovery, they found themselves coming closer to the motor, which,

thus loaded, was now only slowly moving up a steep foothill of the mountain; and soon nearly ceased to move.

Whereupon the air became thick with missiles, Cobby coaxing the motor all he could in vain: and the fact that at that hill-top, not far, was deliverance, and the fact that the whole misery was unnecessary, since the men were willing to sell their captive, added to the affliction and prickly-heat of his fix. He even contemplated surrender, but dreaded being killed before the meaning of the surrender could be understood; and now Spiciewegiehotiu called out: "You get shot! me run"—making a movement to dismount; but Cobby's elbows instinctively nipped to hold her under her cover, and in the same moment he was aware of a whisper somewhere that said: "*Good health!*" the motor now leaping onward, Sueela gone.

When he flung a glance backward, he saw her running, struggling forward, but backward from him, he fast abandoning her. . . .

What in the world a man should do now he did not know. All the ruth that was in him, all the God's pity, groaned and rued. To dash back to her on foot . . . but Spiciewegiehotiu could not manage the motor. . . . To be with either was bitterly to abandon the other. . . .

As for Spiciewegiehotiu, not having Sueela's actual experience that getting off sometimes made the motor go, she did not at first know what had caused the motor to spurt forward, but very quickly realized in some way that Sueela had leaped off; and immediately a scream: "*Sueela!* Make it stop!"

Cobby now thought of stopping to wait for Sueela, the ground here near the hill's brow being not so steep, but when he now peered round, it was to see Sueela down on the ground, and the foremost group of Swingoni almost upon her: so, seeing the needlessness of imperilling Spiciewegiehotiu and himself, he shrank from stopping—though, in fact, if Spiciewe-

giehotiu had been shot, it would have been by some random arrow not meant for her, she being wealth to the savages ; and over the hill's top they swiftly went, Spiciewegiehotiu in a flush of rage beating upon his face, shrieking, wriggling in his grip to be free, he crying to her : " It is useless ! " she in a scarlet fever of passion still screaming at him : " Cobby, let me *go !* " But on, downhill, he bounded, till after a while their fight capsized the bicycle ; and when she started up to fly back, he caught her, and they fought, they by this time being quite out of sight of the tribesmen.

Spiciewegiehotiu flopped down upon the path, clasped her hands on the top of her head, and bawled : " *Sueela !* "

Only when Cobby represented to her that Masandhlwana's force was near on the mountain, that Sueela might be merely wounded, that something might yet be done, did she consent to go on with him.

But when near morning he and she—for she would not be kept away—and with them the King himself and a posse of spears afresh reached the spot, it was to see the body of Sueela decapitated, her hands hacked off, for the savages had gnashed ; and when the posse crossed the lake at a drift to take vengeance, the village was still and dead, the slayers fled.

Thus Sueela met her death there : it had all happened in three crammed minutes of impulse, accident, and catastrophe ; and the moving Finger, having writ, moved on.

XL

EN ROUTE

TO Nasandhlwana, as to all, Cobby was now, in fact, "a god"; and it was with a squad of Wo-Mashenya cavalry that he, on the motor, and Spiciewegiehotiu, horsed, re-entered Eshowe.

There already Spiciewegiehotiu saw everything changed; the foreign regiments all withdrawn; coming for her along the country-roads, shuffling with brush of shoulders, both bull and cow, in crowds, in monstrous mobs, trotting with rowdy knock-knees, and orbs distraught, and horns transformed to the oddities of form to which the Wa-Mashenya warp all their horns; and flocks of Wa-Ngwanya on all paths, thronging back to their abandoned kraals, thronging out from Eshowe to welcome Spiciewegiehotiu with shoutings of frenzy, for throughout Wo-Ngwanya like loosened effluvia had flown the news that Cobby was "a god," god*like* beyond doubt, and on their side, their Queen's knight and might, and not *they* were defeated, but Nasandhlwana was defeated, and M'Niami: and they were coming, had come, again, singly, in multitudes of groups, grinning pilgrimages, gay of gait, so that now every wood round Eshowe was full of brisk fingers picking withies with which to rebuild; and in very few days a new Eshowe stood there.

But Spiciewegiehotiu was stone—showed no elation, her face blanched like marble; she hardly spoke; only, suddenly, as she sat astare, she would clasp her hands on the top of her head to bawl: "*Sueela!*"

Of which sorrow of hers Cobby writes: "I have heard her say many gross things, as was to be anticipated, but, such is that gift of grace which she has from Heaven, I have hardly ever seen her do anything

gross and ugly, until now that she shows this negro grief. No, here, I admit, she is not pretty, her mouth opening oblong, as she bawls '*Sueela!*' the whole exhibition having that indecent aboriginalness of the motions and emotions of children and lower animals; but all the more heart-breaking for me is this tribulation because of its naked and shameless sincerity; and something in me, too, screams 'Sueela.' . . ."

Sueela's body, brought back, was taken to Mandaganya's singed domain, that the Queen might not see it, and there, on the third day after the return, was buried in the presence of Daisy. Two hours after which, while Cobby was busied about a waggon with six negroes who had eagerly agreed to go three hundred miles with him, he now making final preparations for the trek, a deputation of councillors, having Mandaganya for their spokesman, approached him, to beg him not to go, but to wed the Queen, and be their King.

Now, no protest so far had come from Spiciewegiehotiu as to his preparations—no prayer to stay—nothing. And this deputation surprised him.

"How do you know that the Queen would wed me?" he asked them; upon which one of the councillors winked at him; another cried out: "That all right—na!" and he understood that now Spiciewegiehotiu was moving to hold him.

And though he knew that she would not now burn his things—for he had observed the fuel-heaps under the waggons, and had given her to know that that was a good thing for her and for the sigodhlo that she had not accomplished her will—yet he now felt a misgiving, a fear lest she might be at some scheme to keep him.

"Now, Mandaganya," he answered, "this is not fair. You know that I am not going eagerly, but because I must, because I, like you, am a priest, an elder, *knowing more* than children, and having duties to do. And you but make harder the doing of what has to be done when you ask me not to do it."

She bent her head ; and they left him.

The next day everything was ready for the departure : but, for the heart-break of parting, he delayed still three days, spent mainly with the Queen, to whom he showed the uses of many things which he was leaving with her, he meaning to go with only one waggon ; and she made no prayer that he would remain, being now all shut in herself, dumb, sullen, anon muttering the name of her dead friend.

But on the afternoon of departure an uproar arose which Cobby afterwards believed to have been engineered by her. . . .

It was somewhat before sunset ; his six were awaiting him with the waggon in the Square, he having been in the royal hut an hour to say good-bye, when the populace began to clamour at the sigodhlo gate, got in, or were *let* in, got into the royal grounds, or were *let* in, and came roaring in thousands up the avenue, clamouring : " Marry Sir Cobby ! Make Sir Cobby remain ! Make Sir Cobby King ! "

In the midst of which Spiciewegiehotiu suddenly flung herself before him, holding him, saying with an imploring face : " You stay, no ? They call you a god, they want you for their King. You stay with them and me, no ? "

Cobby groaned. " Ah, how pitiless of you, to make it so bitterly difficult for me ! If you see me leaving my soul behind me, do you not conceive that I go because I ought, and must ? "

" And you think me live ? " she cried to him : " Sueela dead—through *you :* you not always act right ! You think me live ? Three days after you gone me stiff dead ! "

A flush of resentment rushed up his face. " Oh, shame, to attempt to hold me with such a statement ! But even *that* shall not hold me. Understand that I *go.*"

" What ! You say that to me ? Whether me live or die ? "

" Yes ! I say so ! "

Upon which up at once she sprang in a flush of passion to rush to the door, to throw it open, and to shriek to the people with the shrill tongue of a shrew : " Go way ! He care nothing about you and me ! He not want me ! Go way ! Go way ! "

Then she crashed the shutter into its place afresh, and went to stand with her back propped upon the wall, all pallid now, he walking about with pocketed hands, dumb, wrung with sorrow.

And presently he stepped to her, held her shoulders, touched each of her cheeks with a kiss, she like an image which is kissed, while a breath that trembled and broke rose in him in a struggle to utter " good-bye " ; and not till he was well in flight from her did she make one step to restrain him, but then stopped, and dropped down, staring, while he with a bent body fled away for the gateway, sobs now gobbling out of his god-forgotten solitude.

So he went away ; but during the next days made but slow progress, lingering within Wo-Ngwanya, bidding a repining good-bye to its rills and wilds and winds. A garnet in a fragment of gneiss that rolled down a roadside hill to him he kissed before dropping into his pocket ; he picked up a sprig of grass, of indigo, a francolin's feather, to drop into his pocket for parting's sake, his heart aching.

Anon he would say droopingly to the executioner, who had proffered himself with enthusiasm to be of the six : " Well, Sandelikatze, my friend, how do you say that she is faring ? " to which Sandelikatze would ever answer : " You not fret : she get over it. When anybody once try to die, and not die, they not try again."

On the second evening they turned into Hyena Pass, and on the third evening were still no further than that Hyena Kranz where the cavern is in which Cobby had chloroformed Macray and the rest of the sleepers, and had been arrested by the Queen's men dashing out from ambush. There they stayed the night ; and he, listening to the cascade expatiating

to itself on its special case, lifting his eyes to the scintillating bit of sky visible within the theatre of cliff, sat for hours at the cavern's mouth, smoking, thinking of how in that near thicket Sueela's lips, sealed for evermore, had kissed him a second time of thrice, and he had twice wildly kissed the Queen in the interior chamber, to be sentenced to those thirty days which he had served in " The Elephant."

All his six were asleep in the exterior hall when he walked into that interior hall, to sleep on the spot, as nearly as he could recall, where the Queen had slept, or pretended to sleep.

And presently he slept—not for long, wakened by the ache of the weight of that solitude that lay upon him, and for life would lie, feeling now, as not before, how really the being of his cousin had become an ingredient of his blood, and how grievous without her, as without serum, was his disease. He groaned in the dark ; but did not harbour the impulses that spurred him to turn back to her kisses.

And again he slept, longer this time ; but this time had a nightmare in which he seemed to be fighting with a cheetah, which floored and was choking him—till he woke : and now he found that some forearm was over his throat interfering with his breathing, and somebody asleep near him.

He sat up, could see nothing but, groping warily, felt a face . . . hair. . . . .

And now fulness of love overflowing flooded his soul, exultancy, extravagance of gratitude, a broken-hearted lowliness, he dropping back to sob on his face a long while, steadily but soft, so as not to wake her.

XLI

AFRICA

"SO you have come?" he said to her, seated beside her in the morning light.

She shrugged, she smiled a little, hugging her shins. "Eheh, me come."

"You love me?"

"Eheh. And you, no?"

"Eheh."

"So you come back now with me, no?"

"Ah, now, don't start that again . . . I am all in heaven! I love God! And you?"

She shrugged. "Eheh."

"So you actually come with me . . . I can't, I can't, realize it! . . . But what in the world have you done about the Government?"

"Me proclaim Rambya King. Me get Mandaganya to consent."

He clapped his fingers. "You sagacious thing! You wise nut!"—this Rambya being a nobody, a blacksmith, but noted for strength in the head. (He had been poisoned at Cobby's "banquet.")

"And what," he asked, "do the people say about Rambya?"

"They trust in me. Most of them say yes."

"Good, good. . . . And how did you come?"

"Me come on a horse to the top of the pass, then me come on alone on foot. The town come after me; me order them back; they lift up their voice and bawl . . . But they not love me more than me love them." Now her countenance convulsed, tears flowed down her stony cheeks, till on a sudden she chuckled, leaping up, saying: "Come, let's get away before me run back."

That evening they were among the foot-hills south

of the mountains, where, seated on a stone with her, holding her thumb, looking over plain and wood that rolled away to the frame of space, he said to her : " We two shall need, I can see, to be extremely distant and discreet with each other, during this great trek."

" Why so ? " she wished to know.

" There are reasons. One is that you are going to a land of a good many handsome and gifted men of your own race, and I think it only fair to you that you should see these beforehand, so as to make a deliberate selection, before I rivet you irrevocably to me."

At which she smiled a little on him, with something of motherly pity, saying : " Poor Cobby : you something like a child. Cobby soon see."

" I mean it, though," he said : " you, too, will see."

" Yes, me chiefly, poor me . . . As to those handsome men in that country, me will love them only with my eyes, Cobby ; Cobby me love with my backbone, no, Cobby ? " She touched his knee, and his being flushed to hues of emotion like the vacuum tube flushing to chromes of beauty at the first stroke of the pump.

That night, however, and several nights, they slept within separate coverts, until they were suddenly abandoned by their six companions, this taking place on the sixth midnight.

On that sixth day, during the rest following the midday food, the whim took Spiciewegiehotiu to be given instruction in the use of the machine-gun, which Cobby had considered needful to bring with him. " Show me how you do it," she begged him ; so he got up, deposited the gun on the ground, and, sitting before it—one of the little Vicker's—exhibited how to thread the belt-tag through the feed-block, how to drag down the crank-handle once, and once again, and then let her thumb the thumb-pieces, and be shaken by the shocks of its strong agitation, as it threw out a few bullets.

Her verdict, as she stood up from it, was : " It good " ; and then she wished to know : " But where you get the cartridges to put into the belt ? " upon which he pointed out the small-arms ammunition-box in which the cartridges were, the six Wa-Ngwanya being spectators at the exhibition : and there the incident appeared to end.

But in the silence of that night Spiciewegiehotiu rose up, stole through bush to Cobby, assured herself that he slept, then went soft and woke the Wa-Ngwanya led them to the waggon, and again, slowly, showed them how to load the gun. Two then took the S.A.A. box, one the tripod, one the gun, and she walked a mile with them northward to a spot where, they having now dropped prostrate before her, she said to them : " Show Rambya how to shoot the gun. . . . Tell him me say again me will be hoping in that country me go to that he soon add Wo-Mashenya to Wo-Ngwanya ; but he better let M'Niami alone till Daisy dead. . . . Tell him me say Good luck . . . Get up, my sons, let me kiss——" She could utter no more.

So it was with opened arms that Cobby hurried to her early the next morning to exclaim : " The men are all gone ! "

" My goodness ! " says she : " they run away ? "

" Yes, what in the world shall we do now ? "

" Oh, well," she said resignedly, " me-and-you, Cobby. Me know Africa : we get through. You drive, me your voorlooper, no ? "

But Cobby was all in dismay ; and in an hour another outcry from him : " The machine-gun is gone ! "

" Gone . . . ? "

" The men have stolen it ! "

" My goodness ! "

" We may bitterly regret its absence before long ! "

" Never mind, Cobby," she said, her hands on his shoulders : " we fight with rifles, if we have to fight. Me-and-you, Cobby ; me-and-you, no ? Me give you

a kiss. . . . That something like a machine-gun, no, Cobby ? "

He called the oxen ; they walked on.

And with many a care and scare, and with many a scrape and escape, they trekked many days—or say wended, one of the early incidents of the journey being their bursting into a belt of tsetse, out of which their cattle emerged infirm and collapsing one by one : whereupon, abandoning waggon and goods in uninhabited country, afoot they two confronted the realm whose name is Immeasurable, Innumerable, Immutable, Unimaginable, the Egyptian Sphinx, the Pan of Africa. Once north of the Sabi, once north of the Limpopo, they fought formal battles, with Spiciewegiehotiu as commander, the second struggle going on several days from a kopie on whose granite top was no water, they then naked save for a rag that might as well have been cast away, and haggard with a hunger which the " cabbage " scooped from the roots of leaves of the dwarfpalm hardly appeased.

But, tattered, famished, parched, chewing anon morsels of the soft wood of baobab to win a little moisture, reduced to the elements of being, brutish in need, they still were not savage nor brute, and Spiciewegiehotiu got still a sense of the god's gesture when, on the top of that kopie, or where they halted in some darksome covert under vaults all informed with stars, she saw him conning the altitude of Alpha Andromedæ, remarking Alpha Eridani, connoting the slope of Canopus. " Me think me never to understand how that box tell where we are," she would say ; and would add : " There is only Cobby."

Nor was that other box, of cardboard, so guarded by Cobby, less astounding—how thousands of cows could be crowded into that petty space. " This *paper* is *money*—cowries, as it were," he told her, in English now—they lying one night within a limestone bunk behind bush, invisible to each other, thunders sounding outside, the drought now done, the rains of April puddling, the floods descending—" *money* is

not wealth ; how much *money* we two have ! yet how little wealth : bread, butter, boots, is wealth : anything desirable for itself, acquired from Nature *by work*, *i.e.* by using Force or Power, and moving something by God's help—that is wealth ; and money *represents* wealth in some places, since it fills little space."

" But it mine, this wealth ! " she cried : " how you say it yours ? How Caray can give it to you, if it mine ? "

" Well, he did. It was buried—lost to you. Then he gave it me."

" But how he could ? My father's wealth ! "

" No, not your father's ; his " by law" ; but fantastic laws are to be laughed at. *Well* is *good*, or God ; *wealth* is *goods*, or God, or Power, or Force ; the effect of Force is motion ; and when Force moves anything, '*work*' is said to be done, as when a planet flies, or a stone drops, or when by God's help we wink, or plough : so *wealth* or *goods* belongs to workers who move things by Force, or Power, or God's help, to acquire them from Nature. But your father could not have moved enough things in hundreds of years to acquire seven million pounds' worth of things, and the laws that say that he did are laws made by lubbers, ' lawyer ' minds, men who, not being trained in thought, cannot think, who, in so far as they are not scientists, know nothing, but are like children, who cannot build, but *play* at building, making sand-mounds, not houses of men. Anyway, there is no you and I. We will call the money yours, and I will spend it for you."

"Oh, but no," she muttered, "we call it yours, and me spend it for you"

He answered : " It may spend itself in the rains close to our skeletons. Still fifty miles before the Limpopo."

It was soon after this that she generaled him in their second (Limpopo) battle, she being, moreover, a great gun at game, and had, moreover, a singular knack in catching fish by different tricks, some-

times with nothing but her hand, a trick of the wrist, or a baobab-shell affixed to a stick, catching jack in the upper branches of the Zavora, barbel in the Limpopo, a knack that four or five times gave them life where game was lacking, and where no kraal, lost in the dark heart of the vast of some haunted forest, was wrought to sorrow with all their poverty and forlornness.

Yet, even in fever regions in the rains of April and May, their health remained excellent, and if Cobby anon desponded, not so Spiciewegiehotiu, who, in spite of her *grossesse*, was not often tired, never perspired, and when they got to the granite country, craggy with quartz outcrops, bordering upon the northern Boers, the girl-child to which Spiciewegiehotiu gave birth in a deserted village, in which not a dog was still visible—a girl-child to which they agreed to give the name "Sueela"—presently gave evidence of no little vigour and grip on life, in spite of its parents' training in trepidation and privation.

Thenceforth, the tokens of civilization now commencing to unfold themselves before them, the faring became merrier. Clothed now and comfortable in stomach, the three reached Pietermaritzberg; and at Port Natal Spiciewegiehotiu, although yonder in the North she had often watched the rotting *Florida* cocked on its rocks, widened her eyes one night at sight of the lines of lights of a liner, a street of dream and mystery on the sea, built by the Divinity that builded the sea and the bee's crib, and still trickier builds and trickier, increasingly. . . .

THE END

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Children of the wind

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